

SCIENCE FICTION *Quarterly*

MAY

MAR 22 1954

25¢

THE GUTHRIE METHOD

by Raymond Z. Gallun

SMALL WAR

by Jerome Bixby

THE ADAPTABLE ONES

by Morton Kless

ALL
STORIES
NEW



THE FAMOUS JUELENE SYSTEM GUARANTEE



LOVELIER HAIR IN 7 DAYS OR YOUR MONEY BACK



Fine special daily Juelene System care helps PREVENT, DANDRUFFY DULL, DRY, BRITTLE ITCHY SCALP, BURN'T HAIR, through lubrication, massage & stimulation.

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DON'T WAIT UNTIL IT'S TOO LATE

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YOU GET EVERYTHING, the JAR of JUELENE SYSTEM (SCALP and HAIR LUBRICANT), the LANOLIN CREAM SHAMPOO, the DH-12 FORMULA containing CHOLESTEROL, PLUS the SPECIAL LANOLIN COMPOUND, ALL A REAL BARGAIN AT \$4.40 BUT ALL YOU PAY IS ONLY \$2.98, plus postage, FOR EVERYTHING. FOLLOW THE JUELENE SYSTEM DIRECTIONS you receive with your package OF THESE 4 FORMULAS, and YOU WILL BLESS THE DAY YOU BEGAN and TRIED THIS PROPER WAY.

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May
1954

SCIENCE FICTION Quarterly

Volume
3
Number
1

Feature Novelet

THE GUTHRIE METHOD

by Raymond Z. Gallun

10

A damaged heart seems to have sealed Guthrie's fate, but he risks everything in one dangerous plan. If he can survive space-flight...

THE ADAPTABLE ONE

by Morton Klass

64

Who and what are these beings called Gods, who come and take people away when they're fat and in the prime of life?



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ROBERT W. LOWNDES, Editor

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You Practice Broadcasting with Parts I Send

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Nothing takes the place of PRACTICAL EXPERIENCE. That's why NRI training is based on LEARNING BY DOING. You use parts I furnish to build many circuits common to both Radio and Television. With my Servicing Course you build the modern Radio shown at left. You build an electronic Multimeter which you use to help fix sets while training at home. Many students make \$10, \$15 a week extra fixing neighbors' sets in spare time, starting soon after enrolling. I send you special booklets that show you how. Mail coupon for my big 64-page book and actual Servicing Lesson, both FREE. See other equipment you build and keep.

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America's Fast Growing Industry Offers You Good Pay, Success

Do you want a good pay job, a bright future, security? Then get into the fast growing RADIO-TELEVISION industry. Hundreds I've trained are successful RADIO-TELEVISION TECHNICIANS. Most had no previous experience, many no more than grammar school education. Keep your job while training at home. Learn RADIO-TELEVISION principles from easy-to-understand lessons. Get practical experience on actual equipment you build with parts I send you.

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TV now reaches from coast-to-coast. Over 25 million TV sets are now in use, about 200 TV stations are on the air; hundreds more being built. This means more jobs, good pay jobs with bright futures. Now is the time to get ready for success in TV. Find out what Radio-Television offers you. Mail coupon now for my 2 Books FREE!

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"I am becoming an expert Technician as well as Radiotician. Without your practical course I feel this would have been impossible. My business continues to grow."
Philip K. Brogan, Louisville, Ky.

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"I am Broadcast Engineer WFLM. Another technician and I have opened Radio-TV service shop over space time. Big TV fees here. As a result we have more work than we can handle."
J. H. Langley, Jr., Suffolk, Va.

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"I was a high school student when I enrolled. My friends began to bring their Radios to me. I realized a profit of \$100 by the time I completed the course."
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The ABC's of
SERVICING

How to Be a
Success in
Radio-Television



A Department of Letters and Comment

As I Was Saying...

WHEN I first started reading science-fiction, the magazines usually had words to the effect that "this is YOUR magazine" somewhere in each issue, with the accompanying inference that whatever the reader asked for, that should they have. Of course, many readers (including myself) implied from this that all they had to do was to ask for some change, etc., and lo, it would be theirs. Nothing was said of the various necessities of magazine makeup and layout, production costs, display value, the fact that some authors were unobtainable at the magazine's rates, etc.

Yet, in a sense, this statement to the readers was true, even though its application had to be much more limited than most readers could realize. It may be that, at times, other types of magazines have invited and encouraged readers to put in their suggestions

and requests, and have followed these insofar as was possible; all I know about the matter is that I saw this feature first in a science fiction magazine, and have seen it continuously in science fiction magazines, but have not seen it in any other kind of magazine.

Perhaps this did a great deal in the way of educating the science fiction audience to the value of their participation; certainly among science fiction readers there seem to be far more persons (unconnected with the publishing world) who show awareness of the factors involved in bringing out a magazine, than is the case with the readers of any other type of fiction. True, there are many, still, who do not realize that the individual reader (or, in some cases, even a fairly large group of readers) cannot always get what he wants from a publication

[Turn To Page 8]

You Can Master The Power of Your "Sixth Sense"

These Unconny Experiences PROVE YOU Have a "Sixth Sense"!

Buried deep among the atoms of your inner mind there is a mysterious sixth sense which is capable of producing amazing miracles.

Now often have you had the feeling someone was staring at you—then turned around and found that someone WAS staring at you? You hadn't seen that person—did you?

Now many times have you been talking and thinking about a person—then suddenly he or she appears? You had no reason to expect him or her. But your inner mind knew!

So you ever have the premonition that something is going to happen—then, bingo!—that very thing DOES happen? Something you ever started to say and then someone else started to utter the SAME words?

Have you ever had a dream—and then seen your dream become a reality, just as your inner mind had pictured it?

We've all had unconny experiences like these. You can't possibly explain them unless you admit that you DO have a sixth sense but this mysterious power is developed to a higher degree in some people than in others.

Our human mind is the most marvelous mechanism ever devised. It will generate energy, its little-known powers, when properly directed, can work millions of modern miracles. All we have to do is to learn how to release, direct and use those mysterious forces which we all have within us.

Some years ago, the noted "father of modern psychology," Will James of Harvard, made the astonishing statement that most people use only 10% of their mental power! The other 90% or less idle.

Now, at last, science is making it easy for us to use that vast reserve of brain power! A few people seem to know instinctively the secret of harnessing this power. Others must learn, but once you learn the secret, NOTHING is beyond your power—NOTHING IS IMPOSSIBLE!

This doesn't mean we can all be Einsteins, Edison's or Fords. It does mean that we can have the happiness, peace of mind and feeling of security—plus the success in our chosen life's work—which we have every right to want and expect!

We can cast off the fears and doubts and troubles which plague us by day and keep us tossing in bed at night. We can enjoy better health, too. It is now a proven fact that many minor and major ailments are caused directly by our minds. Every year thousands die needlessly from ulcers caused by nothing more than worry and nervous tension!

Man Is Just Now Beginning to Learn The True Power of the Human Mind!

For almost a hundred years, scientists have known about and talked about atomic energy. It is now becoming a reality. It has been done about it. In fact, very few of our "modern" inventions are actually brand new. Leonardo Da Vinci's flying machine built in the 16th century. The airplane built in the 19th century more than 120 years ago. Bats have been equipped with "radar" for over a million years. Bells, gongs, bells, have transmitted since the dawn of time. And the headlight and the lantern have been used. They have been using the principle of the diesel engine to make fire for 200 years!

Likewise, the most amazing and mysterious powers of the inner mind were known to our ancestors. The great scientists and philosophers. Their knowledge of these miraculous forces never died. It has been passed down through the centuries by a chosen few of each decade. Now these powers are being brought to light for the first time. Now you and I can benefit by the precious knowledge of the inner mind—and learn how to put those forces to work!

As You Think—So You ARE!

That phrase comes from the Bible. It is just as true today as it was 2,000 years ago! But NOW we have the means to change along the right line! Now we know how much better we can make our lives by

simply releasing and putting to work the tremendous forces which have been lying dormant in our minds!

You've noticed that some lucky people seem to coast along through life. They get all the good breaks—while others, who have just as much ability, talent and education as they do, are in ruts, but their brains cut innumerable knots, yet never get anywhere! Do you know the one simple secret that makes certain people so successful—the lack of which holds all the others back? It's that hidden power which we all have and can now all learn how to use!

Of course you'd like to have a better life. Happier, richer life. More understanding, respect and affection from your family, friends and associates. Greater success in your life work. More genuine security and peace of mind in this troubled world!

You can have all these things in abundance—without limit! It's impossible—nothing is beyond your reach—when you know how to use The Secret of The Power Within You.

You must learn to release, use and apply your hidden power! You will be astonished at how quickly good things begin to happen—how rapidly you begin to make real progress toward the fulfillment of your dreams and ambitions. And, you will be amazed at how easily you can get rid of your fears, troubles and worries begin to fade away. You'll be delighted with the new peace of mind which begins to arise over you like a protective cloak! You will begin to really live!

You'll find you can turn this wonderful power on like a faucet. It flows continuously, almost 100% automatically. You quickly learn to use and apply it subconsciously—just as your heart beats and you breathe without even thinking about it. Yes, here is power and strength as abundant as the air itself—once you know how to "tap" it!

Ben Sweetland, known to millions throughout the United States as Radio's Consulting Psychologist and who has contributed many works in the field of applied psychology—quite accidentally discovered the direct contact between the two worlds of man—and how one can at-will—call upon his great mental powers.

The precious pronoun "I" refers to the mental self. Sweetland has taught for years. When this word is added to another, it becomes an instruction to self. "The only difference between the possessor and the new-do-well," this paragonist published in 1935, is that one thinks in terms of "I" (I CAN) and the other in terms of "he" (he CAN). He taught his followers to hold to the thought "I CAN" and in a large number of cases, they proved they could—did things. But, there were cases where this simple formula did not measure up to expectations.

One great truth was definitely established. The words "I CAN" provided the direct path from the conscious mind to the subconscious mind—the one that invoked the power to swing the door to the open sesame.

Mary Jones was a lovely spinster—not beautiful—and resigned to a life of single blessedness. She kept the pushing of happiness to smile on her. A large circle of friends—and a devoted husband came

into being almost as though a magic wand had been used.

Benny Smith had a good singing voice but lacked the courage to use it in public. "I CAN" gave her direct contact with her source of power and she has since appeared on concert stages throughout the United States.

Joe Winters was a machinist earning just enough money to get by. Within days after getting his "I CAN" consciousness he started to expand. Today he operates a business employing 30 machinists.

How You Can PROVE — at NO RISK — That This Secret Will Work Wonders for YOU

The coupon below entitles you to receive a copy of Ben Sweetland's revealing new book, "I CAN"—to read and USE for a month, entirely ON APPROVAL. With it you will also receive, absolutely FREE, Ben Sweetland's Magic Mirror—an ingenious device for self-analysis. The Magic Mirror will be yours to keep, whether you keep the book or not.

Follow the simple, step-by-step instructions given so clearly in "I CAN." Notice the wonderful changes that begin to take place in your mind and personality. AT ONCE, feel the soul-satisfying glow of new self-confidence... the ability to DO all sorts of things you never thought you could before! Marvel at how useful it is to sleep peacefully as a kitten, at night-free of worries, doubts and fears!

A truly glorious experience is in store for you! Prove for yourself—in 30 days or less—that YOU can experience a change in your whole life just as miraculous and wonderful as thousands of others have enjoyed. You risk nothing, but you have a whole new world to gain. Don't delay a single minute. Clip this coupon now.

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See for Yourself Why You Fail — Reveal Your Weaknesses — See Exactly How to Correct Them

Reflected in your Magic Mirror, you'll see yourself as others see you! This revolutionary new device enables you to look deeply into your inner being! Reveals all your weaknesses and strengths—your faults, perhaps, many you never knew you had. Tells how you can now use your assets to gain your goal in life. Shows you the way to the almost miraculous solutions to all of your major problems. Tells you the way to the surest, most effective method of success. It is yours to KEEP—absolutely FREE—whether or not you decide to keep "I CAN."

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220 Fifth Avenue, New York 1, N. Y.

Please rush my copy of Ben Sweetland's new book, "I CAN"—the Key to Life's Success. Send me a plain, unadorned copy for \$2.95, plus five cents postage. I must be 100% or delighted with actual results, or I will return the book within 30 days for a full refund.

☐ FREE! Send me the MAGIC MIRROR—mine to keep even if I return the book.

Name

Address

City State

☐ SAVE POSTAGE! Check here if ENCLOSED \$2.95, in which case we pay postage.

Send GUARANTEE applies, of course.

sheerly by writing in and asking for it. But there are more now, I think, who have a good idea what the editor *can* do for the readers, in response to their requests, than ever before.

One hundred years ago, things were much different in the publishing world. Publisher and editor were often the same person; in any event, the editor had more than mere accept-reject power of manuscripts, and a vote on artwork and covers. The publisher was more likely to be a literary man himself, and he and his editor were in close contact on every aspect of the magazine.

Today, the editor is usually little more than a salaried employee, with definite duties and more-or-less definite responsibilities, but with little authority except in the strictest range of editing. Often, company policies narrow down the editor's range of selection; the budget is nearly always a problem. Covers, makeup, artwork, layout, etc., are usually matters over which he has little control—and no matter how much this may be regretted at times, it is just, in a sense. After all, the editor is not risking his own investment in the magazines; he works on a salary, and so long as his job is there, that salary is paid, week after week, whether a particular issue sells well or not—or, sometimes, whether a particular title has to be dropped or not. The editor rarely has had enough experience in the intricate matters of printing, distribution, and sales-techniques, etc., to vote intelligently—whether his vote is counted or not. Here, the publisher (who is usually a man who has been in the business many years, and knows the answers, insofar as it is possible to know them) cannot afford to defer to judgement based on limited experience. He may try “experiments” at times; but if they do not work out, they won’t be repeated or continued. (And, one of the sad facts of the publishing world is that

no one yet knows a foolproof formula; it’s still an open question why one issue, or one title, sells—where another, with what seems to be as good a cover, makeup, and content, does not. One has to go more or less by statistical averages, which are far from complete.)

Thus, when you write to me now, as many of you have done, asking why we have returned to the earlier general approach to covers—the pretty girl formula—I can only tell you that it was necessary. For nearly a year we experimented with the more “adult” type of cover. I liked them; the art director liked many of them; the publisher thought they were good of their type. But—they did not sell the magazine. It’s pretty certain that the non-girly cover *did* attract some sales; that we did obtain readers who had not noticed the magazine (or who had noticed, but refrained from buying) heretofore. But we lost more readers than we gained.

In all honesty, I must say that I would have made the same decision that our publisher made: to return to the type of cover that was selling the magazines before.

However, where a requested change, or addition, is within my province; and it sounds like a good idea to me; or many readers ask for it and I can see no sound reason for not trying it, I’ve heeded such requests.

Some of you have wondered why I asked for votes on such “obviously desirable” features as trimmed edges, etc. The reason for this has been simply that while I knew that many of you wanted these features, the publisher could not know *how large* such a demand was (or how much such a change was appreciated), unless the reader response indicated it. Publishers know now that science fiction has a vocal audience; they can be impressed by a flood of comment when

[*Turn To Page 84*]



Do Unseen Powers Direct Our Lives?

ARE the tales of strange human powers false? Can the mysterious feats performed by the mystics of the Orient be explained away as only illusions? Is there an intangible bond with the universe beyond which draws mankind on? Does a mighty Cosmic Intelligence from the reaches of space ebb and flow through the deep recesses of the mind, forming a river of wisdom which can carry men and women to the heights of personal achievement?

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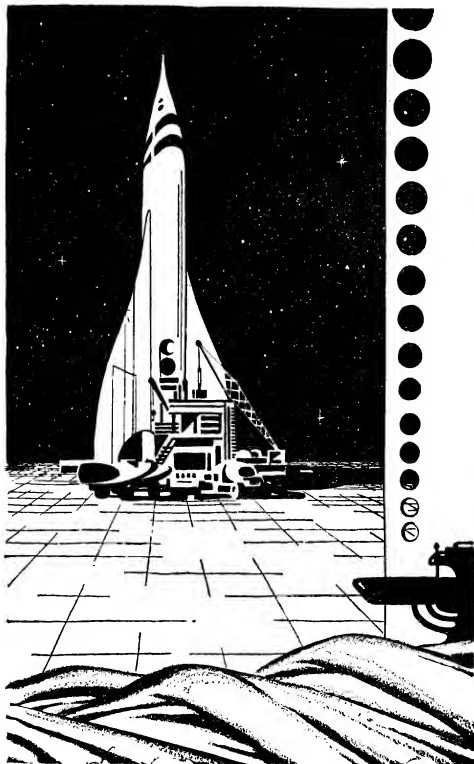
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Lesser gravity ought to imply less strain on the heart and other organs, and a man doomed on Earth might live out his years in space, or on some other planet. The whole question was: could Guthrie's heart take the initial strain of escape-velocity?

THE GUTHRIE METHOD

Novelet of Tomorrow's Hopes

by **Raymond Z. Gallun**

(illustrated by Frank Kelly Freas)

TO JAY GUTHRIE, the knowledge was as old as the doc's words in High School: "No football, fella. Walk. Swim a little. But stop before you get tired..."

Later, there was similar talk from other medicos: "No space-adventuring for you, Guthrie. Remember a languid,



achy time—maybe, some winter or spring when you were a kid? Rheumatic infection. It put a lot of scar tissue in your ticker; can't see why you didn't receive care..."

So that was the damper on early dreams—the tether around his leg. It was hard for a kid to take, especially when he looked as husky and alive as a young bear, and had his father's wild, lonely blood. Once they'd wintered far up in Canada. He'd loved that interlude; but that was when he'd been sick, far away from pill-pushers.

Yes, you tried to take them seriously, but the eagerness to live was too deep; and most of the time you felt too good. Besides, your work made its demands. Jay Guthrie went in for instrument-designing—the nearest he could get to what he wanted. There was no muscular strain, of course; but there was plenty of mental and nervous tension, and long hours, and hurry, and the constant personal excitement which is always a part of creation. Guthrie wasn't the kind to take things easy. Besides, perhaps city life was too hectic for him; there were parties, and girls he knew, and rich moods which made him sure that he was immortal.

What had lurked near him all the time, struck when he was just turned twenty-eight. One second, just arriving at his apartment from a late shindig, he was a little high and in the finest of spirits. The next second, the walls around him, his table, his bed, his books, his whole universe, seemed to flicker like a candle flame. Bands seemed to tighten around his chest. The pain was endurable, but there was a panic with it, such as no other sickness could bring. For it hit suddenly, when the will to live was highest. There was the question: *How can I get through this End of the World as far as I am concerned?* There was the feeling: *I can't sit, stand, or lie down. I'm strangling. I want to run away... But that's no good. What'll I ever do?...*

By then, Guthrie was on hands and

knees on the floor. Mustering his strength and his courage, he crawled toward the service-bell button. Though he hated to be dependent on others, he reached up and managed to press it. Then he crumpled down on the carpet.

Perhaps drowning was like this—you felt helpless, terrified, then resigned. Blackness blanketed Guthrie's vision; still, the vitality of his young flesh and outlook fought back. Rocket-tubes, which he had once thought would be part of his life, seemed to blaze around him. And his last thoughts went farther back than that: to the smell of a haymow of his childhood in Colorado. To the times he'd looked up, past woodland leaves—straight up along the face of a crag, gleaming like graphite in the sunshine—past wisps of cloud clinging to the cold stone, to a few tattered pines rooted at the far top. That place, too, was a thing of longing, a height unclimbed, a dream never attained...

They found him in time; that is, he was not yet dead. Not many years ago, it would have been the end, anyway. But in the hospital they opened his chest; a pump, that for a little while could serve as a heart, was attached to blood-vessels. Anti-coagulant drugs worked. Blood was cleaned and re-oxygenated mechanically. And a surgeon sutured the scarred flesh, lesioned again by constant flexion and strain. But there were limits to what could be done; the prognosis still was not very good.

FOR JAY GUTHRIE, the fogs of a dazed awareness cleared slowly. After a while his friend and university-classmate, Charlie Bonner, was with him. Charlie, who was a physician, grinned.

Guthrie grinned back with his wide mouth. "You know me, Charlie," he said. "Of course I want the dope—straight."

The young doctor's face sobered. "You'll feel pretty good again in a

month, Jay," he said. "Trouble is, what we did is a jury-rigged proposition; it won't last, and we won't be able to fix it a second time. I say four months—six at the top, Jay..."

Guthrie took it well enough, as his friend must have known he would. He still kept grinning; but inside his mind, it was a little different. There was regret and fury at himself for not having taken more care. All the things that a young man hopes to do had been poised in the question that had just been answered: glowing future events, treasures, loves, beauties, or just oblivion—a hillside, a grassy plot, a stone with an inscription. Now, of course, his mind rebelled; it sought, with all the mechanical ingenuity of an instrument-designer, for some way around the sentence he had just heard.

"A small, power-driven pump, Charlie," he said, "worn over the chest like an old-fashioned hearing-aid. Tubes leading inward through a permanent opening made between the ribs. Isn't that—couldn't that be—the answer? How much talk has there been, for many years, about things like that?..."

Doctor Bonner shook his head. "It sounds good, Jay," he replied, "but that's the trouble. Belief in such things is just too glib. For a few hours, they *can* keep a body alive. But the human mechanism is finely balanced beyond your imagining; something always happens if a mechanical heart is used too long. Blood-clotting, bubbles, irritation and allergy where flesh meets inert material—wrong balance between body-need and blood-flow, at a given moment... Damn—if there was only some way to really reduce the labor of a damaged heart for a month or a year!..."

Jay Guthrie scowled up at his friend. He was trying to adjust his thoughts and his outlook to a curtailed future. He was trying to put the plans and hopes aside. Here his reasoning was a beaten path: *Don't be self-centered,*

Jay Guthrie. In one way or another, millions of people, no older than yourself, have faced the same deal. So shelve the silly notions; live from minute to minute and from day-to-day...

"I'll be all right, Charlie," he chuckled.

But during the next twenty-four hours, the sunlight; the trees outside his window; the color of the flowers a girl had brought him; the hummed song of the nurse who came to attend him, her pretty face, her brown hair; the sound of footsteps in the hall; the settling of night, the distant noises of traffic—all this and much more—seemed to become infinitely precious to him, and to be savored and loved for whatever time he still had left. He could not remember ever having looked upon life as so wonderful a possession, in all the years that he knew.

There was also the beauty of remembered reverie—kid dreams of where he would go, and what he would accomplish. But in that, again, there was the core of bitterness, and of a defiance which struggled with all its fury for a way out. And so, suddenly, out of that will and need and groping, there came a thought of what he *might* do, even yet! Now, incredibly, it could seem an answer to everything! That night he was glad to sleep, for it helped shorten the hours that must pass before he could discuss what he had in mind with Charlie, who had promised to come at eleven the next morning.

WHEN HIS friend arrived, Jay Guthrie asked his question without preliminaries: "Look, Charlie—there's nothing more brutal that a guy with a bum ticker could enquire about, I know. But how much chance have I got of surviving the acceleration of a takeoff into space? After I get better, I mean—like you said I would, for a while?"

Guthrie was sure that Doctor Charles Bonner's cheeks went slightly grey at

the query. For a moment the physician's eyes bored into him. "Are you crazy?" Bonner demanded at last.

Jay Guthrie smiled. "Could be," he answered. "But I'm dead serious. I guess you can figure out some of my reasons."

Bonner nodded. "Trying to cram fulfillment of early ambitions of being a bold interplanetary adventurer into four months of time—is that it?" he said. "Also, there might be the common thought that suicide is better than just lying supinely and waiting."

Guthrie chuckled. "Uh-huh—only there *could* be more," he replied. "Look, Charlie—space is the ruggedest thing we know, a killer, a dead, cold vacuum—the opposite and antithesis of life. It is alien and unfriendly. And to us of Earth, the other known planets are little different in aspect from space itself. Though I happen to be one of the people who is fascinated by such things... But you haven't answered my question, Charlie. Could I endure the several minutes of several gravities of acceleration necessary to achieve escape velocity from the Earth? Would my heart quit for good before that could happen; or would there be, say a fifty-fifty possibility of my still being alive after that was accomplished? Maybe you can see now what I'm driving at, Charlie. There's a *weightlessness* out there. So, deadly space *could* have a gentler side. Remember you said something about less strain on a sick heart, Charlie..."

Again Bonner eyed Guthrie curiously. "Oh—" he said at last. "I think I see what you mean, Jay—though Lord only knows if it's valid or not. As for your question, I couldn't honestly promise that the thrust of a rocket, lasting for only about fifteen minutes, would kill you. People—even sick people—are tougher than many would believe. If we waited until you improved to the best condition that you will reach, there might be, as you say, a half-and-half chance of your surviving

to see the stars stripped of atmosphere..."

The excitement of the research physician showed in Bonner's deep-set eyes.

Guthrie's jaw hardened. "Thanks, Charlie," he breathed. "That's all I wanted to know; I'm going to try it."

"No spaceship line would accept you as a passenger, Jay," Bonner warned; "there are rigid insurance liabilities."

"I wasn't thinking of spaceship lines," Guthrie answered. "Before he got killed trying to cross the Atlantic floor in that sub-sea tractor of his, Dad made a pile of money with his books and lectures of high adventure. It's mine, now, and I've made some of my own with my patents. If necessary, I'll blow it all on a small ship of my own."

Bonner kept studying his friend. "You're crazy, like I said, Jay," he commented at last. "As crazy as hell! A man, sick—going *out there!* At least you'll have to take somebody along! Or were you thinking differently?"

"Yes, I was, Charlie," Guthrie informed the young doctor. "I wonder if you know what I mean? At certain times of his life, a man gropes for a certain mood that happens to fit him just then. It's like an instinct. I was born lonely, Charlie—though I like cities, movement, and people, too. But now I want to face the toughest time of my life, alone, and under completely fresh circumstances. I want to feel self-reliant. Maybe it's folly, but I don't want a doctor always to coddle me; that would be defeat of a sort. Of course I'm sure I could get a doctor to go along with me. But this is a toss, winner take all—I wouldn't care for it any other way. Of course, Charlie, you're more than welcome—if you *want* to join the party—for the sake of your own interests, and not to look after me. So make your choice."

Bonner nodded. "I'll think about it," he said. "But you know me. I still have

both of my parents, a wife, and a daughter three years old. And the region off the Earth never set me afire. So there, I guess, is your answer, pal..."

2



JAY GUTHRIE completed his plans and gave his orders from a hospital bed and then a wheelchair. The small ship was delivered to the New York spaceport. Doctor Bonner

saw to the installation of much special equipment; provisions were stowed aboard.

One autumn afternoon—his last on Earth—Jay Guthrie, on his feet again, but unsteady, stood at the spaceport with his friend. The ship was a trim, ugly needle before them. Guthrie didn't know whether it was the instrument of his execution, or something much better.

Guthrie and Bonner had dinner at the port. They watched other craft take off, most of them bound for the rich mining regions of the Asteroids, and for Venus, twin of Earth, which one day might become, by the works of science, not the hot, carbon-dioxide smothered planet it still was, but a second home to man.

Guthrie's goal, tentative at best, considering the life-or-death prospect he faced, was not even visible in the night sky in its present orbital position. But it was outward from the sun; it was ancient and romantic. Its name had been a byword for many years, before the recent reality of interplanetary flight. But now it was of little value, economically.

Before midnight, Guthrie strapped himself to the special couch in the craft's cabin. His friend attached an armlet-like device above his left elbow.

The firing-timers of the ship's rockets already whirled. Ten minutes to go.

"Thanks for everything, Charlie," Guthrie said, shaking the physician's hand. "You'll know what happens. Good luck. Now get out of here fast..."

Charlie Bonner's grin was gone, as the door clicked shut. Outer sounds were cut off, like the movement of a world already left behind. Time rushed on—a current that never stopped. Fuel pumps slobbered into action; the roar and thrust began. In a squeezing tumult of sound, and faltering heartbeats, and pressure where there was no breath left, Jay Guthrie's sense of being vanished.

Perhaps the needle, jabbing inward from the metal ring above his elbow, injected stimulant into a dead arm; perhaps the automatically oxygen-enriched air of the cabin gave no help to moveless lungs. But it was not quite so...

At scattered moments Guthrie was aware, again. His chest seemed full of whirling knives; each breath was another battle; he seemed to fall forever. The silence around him magnified his own ragged breath and the uneven thump of the pulses in his head. Frightening strangeness enveloped him. Yet he was triumphant; he put a capsule in his mouth, sucked water from a flexible plastic bottle, and swallowed.

Into a phone he wheezed harshly: "When I moved, an automatic signal was radioed out, Charlie. So you must know... I'm alive! Now I'm conscious. I'm following your instructions. Maybe I was right, Charlie. We'll see..."

After that, his consciousness was intermittent and vague for the equivalent of many days. When he could, he swallowed medicines and liquid nourishment; pain grew less. He relaxed, slept often—for a long time it seemed that he was never quite awake. The high oxygen-content of the cabin's air made breathing effortless. But the best therapy was another thing, impossible on

Earth. Space was airless, soundless, lifeless, except within the bubble of a ship. Cold, symbolized in Guthrie's childhood by singing telephone wires and numbing cheeks, was of a far deeper order, here. Yet, when the hard ultraviolet rays of the sun were unfiltered by heavy glass, they could kill, too. There was nothing here, as you coursed along, outward, at a velocity that was hard to realize. *There was not even gravity.* And that was the point!

The harsh void was gentle to a damaged heart. There was no lifting of the blood against the massive and unscreenable pull of the Earth! Yes—it was true! He, Jay Guthrie, could feel the sense of ease coming into his ribcage. And the therapy could go on for months—his course to his distant goal was the long one, the slow, outward spiral, which some called the Classic Route. Two hundred and twenty-six days, considering the present orbital positions of Earth and his destination. Time healed everything, didn't it? An old saying. The weightlessness might upset a stomach, until it acclimated itself, but to a heart it was kind. To sleep long hours was a thing of triumph and satisfaction, here.

So, for Guthrie, the shock of strangeness and solitude was cushioned by the thrill of success. He lazed around, dreaming, feeling proud of himself, and pleasantly lonely. Beyond the ports were the stars, the cold blackness—imaginings of his romantic boyhood. He was following other friends beyond the Earth after all!

Even so, he looked back at the Earth, shrunk to a tiny, murky disc in the rear-view periscope, with mixed feelings. It was greenish. Green was the color of life, yet you could also think of it as the color of poison. He could laugh at Earth, now, as if it was a monster that he had eluded. Yet, beyond his joy, could he already feel the icy fingers of an exile, for which, perhaps, there would be no end?

This thought was remote and easy to

forget, for all of his eagerness, now, lay round him and ahead. Years of frustration would be answered. There would be no death, now, unless he were unlucky. He grinned, hummed songs, looked at the grim lines of his instruments and mechanisms as at things of love. He read books about his dimly-imaginable destination. He cooked himself satisfying meals, and learned to eat with clamps and tongs as the spacemen did. Life was a languid relish, a treasure refound. And so he coursed onward. Astrogation he had learned as it had developed, as a person of his interests naturally would—step by step. But now that he was on his way, he did not need it. Mostly a spacecraft was aimed, not steered.

WHEN, AT last, Guthrie neared Mars, with its odd, swirled markings over rust red, he felt prepared and eager—like one who has had a long rest on a remote beach. The escape-velocity of Mars was less than half of Earth's; and since he approached his goal at only that rate, the strain of checking speed would be similarly less than that of his takeoff. Besides, he was in far better shape. Yet, of course, there was a chance. . .

The piloting-mechanism brought the ship in: the rockets thundered at precisely the necessary instant. True, his chest began to hurt: breathing grew difficult. Some of the time he must have blacked out, for the next he knew, he was flying south, as in a plane, on the ship's airfoils. Streamers of dust, blown by the thin, cold wind, marked the desert below. Guthrie hoped that the sickness in him wouldn't last. . . He took over the controls, manually. Yes—he knew where he was going—where he almost had to go. Part of his mind hoped that the gravity of Mars, slightly more than one-third of the terrestrial, would be enough to exercise strengthened though uncertain cardiac muscles—enough, and still not too much. . .

Within an hour he grounded the ship on its belly-skids. Dust flew in every direction. There was a jolting stop, then stillness pregnant with enigma. He was far from being the first man to reach Mars; yet, those who had come had left most of its lonely expanse untouched. Suppressing his eagerness, as well as his fear that the alien solitude would be far too rich for his nerves, Guthrie lay for a full hour on his swivelled couch to rest, and to get the faintness out of him.

Then, in plastic helmet and heavy garments, he was outside, beyond the airlock, his every sense drinking the strangeness in. For then, at least, intense interest was a protecting shield against the nostalgia that could madden a man in places like this. Relieved and happy at this discovery about himself, Guthrie looked around him.

It was early summer, here near the south pole. The small, white sun, which would not set for five Earth-months, hung eternally low over flatness that gleamed wetly in spots, off to the near horizon. The ground was spongy under Guthrie's boots—fallen vegetation centuries old. Something like a leaf quivered. The ground was blackened by the wetness, seeping from the white line of frost and snow off to the south—the polar cap. There, low, snow-whitened mountains loomed, rock sticking blackly through the thin veneer that was melting away, or sublimating. Water could stay liquid only briefly in this tenuous, moisture-greedy air.

Yet at the hub of what looked like a giant bevelled gear—of stone, not metal—lying flat and embedded in the soggy soil, there was a puddle a yard across. Why was he surprised that the ripples on its surface looked just as wind-ripples should? The wonder of his borrowed life was even stronger, here.

NOW HE put a fragment of dry vegetable-substance in the water, and watched the bit of flossy stuff at

its top act as a sail. "A boat on dry old Mars," he said aloud. Guthrie chuckled, remembering times when he was about ten; when the snow was melting at home, he'd imagined himself at the fringe of a Martian polar-cap—before anyone had yet left the Earth.

His own shadow spoiled the puddle; it cut off the sun's warming rays. He saw fronds of frostwork fairly dart from the pool's edge toward its center, swiftly congealing. Yes, shadows were cold, here, and the sky looked cold—almost violet. Thin, yellowish-white lines streaked it, like cirrus clouds at home—not vapor, but finely-divided ice crystals, tainted with ochre dust. Let them cover the sun for a moment, and there would be freezing everywhere...

Yet he saw the green, too—hardy little buds, just now showing through the fibrous matting of fallen growths. And there was something like a flower, low-growing, three-petalled, dark red. He touched it; half-animated, as if it borrowed characteristics from the animals, the flower-thing closed on his gloved finger, and tried feebly to maintain its prickly clutch. "Tough, huh?" he chuckled. "Why not pick on somebody your size? Or do you just want to be friendly?"

He turned his attention back to the puddle, liquid again, but drying fast. He wet a finger, and thrust it under his helmet for an instant; while air puffed suddenly from his lungs, as it would have done at a high altitude on Earth, he tasted the moisture. Though his ears and head buzzed, it was not a very dangerous procedure. And now he knew the flavor of the water of Mars—flat as if boiled—deficient in dissolved oxygen, that is, and faintly salty, in memory of seas that had dried up ages ago, leaving their minerals behind.

Guthrie readjusted his helmet, sat down on that great circular stone, and sought to analyze his complex joy at being here. There was awareness, reverie. In another scene of rusty reds, soft

browns and a faint greens, he was like the hard-looking, grey-eyed kid with a .22 rifle, roaming the woods, exploring this and that passionately as he had been. In a way, it was the reliving of a lost time, as well as something utterly new. It was a deep, and seemingly endless excitement, a balm for the mind, cupped in quiet and lonesomeness and change—hectic New York seemed as remote as if it would not come into being for a million years. There was the thought: *So this is what Mars looks like when you're really on it; it's telescopic distance impossibly shrunk to feet and inches! . . . This is the paradise of Mars, the poplar regions in summer. There's water here, not red desert. The sun never sets; the temperature rarely falls much below freezing. Tough plants can grow, defying the aging of a world. . .*

Guthrie knew that it was good to think and feel as he did now, for the future was surely a murk, here, a dark question, a wondering of what would happen, and what he would do, in the end. There was even the eerie notion that he was gone so far from the Earth, that his new life was something beyond death. Guthrie suppressed the idea, and went on studying his happy mood.

Of course it had many more angles. This planet was not just what he saw, here and now. It was unthinkable cons of history, too, extending back to a separate beginning of life, doubtless in a warm sea, as on Earth. Though Mars being smaller, cooled sooner, became ready to harbor living things, sooner. There must have been jungles, evolution, beasts of murky shape battling to survive. Out of the process emerged a dominant form that was not human, but that had dreamed and built wonderfully, and even—it was known—had left across space, before it won its final battle, and perished.

To be aware of all this, was more wild, inner beauty. Some of it had already been learned and written about by others. The rest was scattered far

and wide, and buried deep, in relics and monuments. Guthrie's brain was full of shifting pictures, dimly-seen—monsters, sea-wash, blue sky, warm wind, cities rising, machines being built. Air growing thinner, colder. . . The reverie of it all, and the solitude, were rich living, now and yet. How few of Mars' thousands of square miles had yet been touched by human boots? Were there spots that even Martian vision organs, now gone forever, had never seen? Even at home, not far from great cities, weren't there woodland nooks that people had never looked upon?

3



JAY GUTHRIE felt a cold, pleasant thrill. For half an hour he sat there on that stone thing, touching all of his surroundings, with an intellectual caress.

Then his interim existence—between now and some revealing moment of the future, when how his patched-up heart had finally fared on Mars became plain, allowing him freedom, or forcing him into narrow limits—began. His lonesome, studious side had no present wish for human companionship. Perhaps the nearest settlement was two hundred miles away, along the fringe of the south polar-cap. But let that thought also belong to the future, when the mood of now—for whose shelter from potentially-harsh strangeness he was so grateful—wore itself out, as inevitably must happen. He dreaded the uncertainties of that future, as perhaps he half-dreaded the people in it. So, for the present, let it be laid aside. . .

Now he started his explorations and studies. First his gloved hands dug deep in the felted layers of fallen vegetation,

beside the great stone cog. Something superficially like a large tawny caterpillar, but much more active, twittered, and scurried out of sight. In the porous, unrotted stuff, so it was said, oxygen released by green plantlife, was trapped; and here the last animals of Mars had sought refuge.

Farther down, he found a hollow ball of fuzz. A nest? Below that were shreds of rust—all that remained of the metal that had once anchored that huge circular mass of rock. Perhaps it was no cog at all, but a channelled valve that had belonged to the irrigation system of the "canals". For here the water of the melting snows had once been deep, and not shrunk to a comparative trace, as at present.

Five feet down, he reached true soil, gritty, crystallised with salt. In a bit of stone were clustered fossils of what must have been marine animals, a billion or more years ago. The shells were not spiral, but straight, like small capsules. Guthrie found, too, a tiny rod of bronze, greened with patina, and a curved bit of glass that might almost have been from a broken electric bulb. What could its Martian history have been?

Reaching the end of interest here for the moment, he left his excavation and looked for more "flowers." But his attention was diverted; from an opening in a mass of sticks, a marble-sized globe of shiny black tugged itself upward tediously with a single clawed and jointed member. Guthrie watched, as the little creature braved the almost-oxygenless upper air, and seemed to seek the sun; when it was out in the open, the one limb it possessed waved as if in worship, and the red dot in its flank waxed and waned like an eye blinking. Then, with the same sluggishness, the thing crept back into its burrow. Guthrie let it go, chuckling benignantly.

HOURS PASSED. Guthrie found more to examine. The sun crept,

degree by degree, around the sky, dipping a little but never setting. Healthy hunger gripped Guthrie, and he went back to his ship; he thawed beef and vegetables, cooked a meal and ate ravenously. Then he slept.

When he awoke, he emerged again onto that misty plain. Only once did he feel a twinge, almost panic; that was when he looked on the greenish star—visible in the thin atmosphere, even in daylight—following the sun. Earth. Home after all. Would he ever be cured enough to go back there? Or would all his remaining days have to be spent here? Just for the moment, and even so soon, the chill in him became a little too cold. . .

But he laughed at last. Now was now. On the crest of a knoll were wavering papery things on stalks, and tumbled rocks that had not been hewn square by nature. Eagerly he hurried over the resilient ground, to examine traces of blue and green paint on the yellow stone, marking out a half-bent figure, the size of a man but not human, beside columns of nameless hieroglyphics.

So the pattern of life was set for the Long Daylight, the polar summer of Mars—nearly twice as long as the summers of Earth. The magic his mind put on his surroundings was durable—it didn't tarnish easily. He began to work as a scientist—with camera, microscope, notebook, and specimen-box. As the Martian thickets sprouted quickly around him, he was the alien intruder and prowler, the student introvert with joy in his mind, and little thought of time.

Finally, perhaps in restlessness, Guthrie took off in his ship, and flew far north to the equator; he landed there, in the scraggy belt of a dead sea bottom. There the sun rose and set regularly. There, amid spiny growths that could draw only a minute quantity of moisture from the atmosphere, were ruins—painted, carved, tumbled,

blasted, or just weathered away. Domes, arches, heaps of rust, strange underground cells, ceramic fragments—all hinting at what had been, though not now to be clearly seen except by long toil and study. There he remained for weeks, poking around, growing tougher. Here the days were warmer, but the nights, lit by two fragmentary moons, were fearfully cold.

At last, Guthrie took off again, and flew on to the north polar night, still as eternity, starshot, fanged with incredibly long crystals of hoarfrost, slowly building a whitecap. But depression soon gripped him, there; after an hour of wandering, he launched his rocket once more, with the feeling that he was fleeing from death.

Re-crossing the equator, he saw his first sign of other numan intrusion—the whirling blades of a helicopter only a couple of miles away. His ship was flying far too fast for a hail, or a landing and a palaver, and the odd thought hit him that maybe that was good. He sought a reason for his half-longing, half-fearing, half-resenting. Twice, on Mars, when he had least expected it, he had felt a dizziness, and a stabbing pang in his chest—for all his general increase in vigor. Was it then the thought that others could leave if they wanted to, and the fear of learning that he himself must stay? Was it this sense of difference between himself and these others?

His ship roared on, back to the shrinking south polar cap, and his original stamping-grounds. Vegetation was dense, now; some of the tall, stalky plants already bore strange fruit.

AND SO Guthrie went back to his studies, still fascinated, but with a weariness beginning at the fringes of his mind—as if he'd been living with one mood for too long. A boyhood searching, projected to the man, as a scientist, was one part of life. But

there was certainly another side to himself—social, and needing music, voices, and love... Did he have to cling to this gift-existence, borrowed for him from death by space and Mars, because it was all that he was reasonably sure he possessed? Or could he go home, eventually? Sometime he would have to find out. But his doubts made him procrastinate, and now they put a touch of half-bitterness deep in his brain. It made him reckless, tempting him to defy fate. Thus, in the pastel-tinted landscape, brooding and quiet, his excursions afoot took him farther and farther from the safety represented by his ship and his supplies.

Perhaps it was that the strangeness of the Red Planet, made for no man, was affecting him, too, by its own intrinsic nature. He knew that he looked rough, odd—a creature that somehow blended more and more with his surroundings. He was a hermit, who almost seemed to belong to these hills and plains and ruins, for all of his days.

Finally he forced himself to think of searching out the nearest settlement. But before he could act willingly, circumstances forced his hand. He was farther afield than he'd ever been before, when, a half-mile away, he saw a figure—much like his own—moving erratically, as if at the point of exhaustion.

Guthrie hurried ahead in the long leaps that the low gravity permitted, here. He soon reached the old man, whose lips were purpling with cyanosis, behind the plastic window of his helmet. His air-purifiers were giving out, but still the faded eyes could show an unreasoning defiance. Guthrie heard the words, faintly: "You can't take me back to town! I won't stay on Mars..."

With compassion, Guthrie tackled the old man, and threw him to the ground. "Just relax, Friend," he said.

From his own pack Guthrie took a new air-rejuvenator cartridge, and clipped it into the vagrant's breath-kit. Then, baring the scrawny forearm for an instant, he used a sedative needle. The rest, he thought, should be easy. This tired old man, with the classic features, could not have come far, he was sure. Guthrie could see some of his foot-tracks in the soggy ground; they led back along the strip of moisture and growth that ringed the bed of the ice-cap. All that he had to do was follow that strip until he saw the settlement, which must be nearer than he had believed. There was no need to retrace his way with a burden, to the now-distant ship.

So he began to march; but as the hours went by, and the sun's position shifted, it became evident that the ancient waif, driven by some potent compulsion, had wandered many more miles from the settlement than he had at first imagined.

But Guthrie hurried on, always led by the thought that his goal must be beyond the next thicket or ridge. Then, too, there was that taint of recklessness in him, that took risks with a kind of angry willfulness.

TWICE, Guthrie had to pause, to drug his struggling captive again. The sun circled the whole sky once—that meant a whole Martian day passed. Exhaustion crept over him; his chest ached just faintly, bringing a familiar worry; and he stopped to rest, and to swallow a little water from his canteen, and some food-tablets. Then he had to be on his way again, for he had no more spare rejuvenators for his own breath-kit. Exhaustion deepened. Guthrie thought that this was his last adventure. But then, after more than forty hours of plodding on, he saw the place he sought built on a rise of ground—low houses of Martian stone, but sealed with Earthly metal to keep them airtight; a single frag-

ment of a street, and long, low sheds to house shops, and hydroponic gardens.

Guthrie saw it all through the blur of weary mind and body. The settlement looked utterly out of place in this pastel scene of forgotten history. It was bleak and barren. Yet he looked upon it with reserved elation. His thought was that his heart had been strained, coming here—yet he had not dropped! Maybe this meant that it was well again, after all!

He went down the street. A man, younger than himself, and clad in the helmet and heavy garments which everyone had to wear while out of doors here, came up and helped him with his burden, without a smile and with scant words: "Thanks, Mister. Landron—biologist—likes Mars, but gets goofy streaks. Nine years here. Too long. Almost seventy... Here's the hospital."

Guthrie had warm hopes and nostalgic yearnings—for city movement, again, Earthly trees and sky, talk among old friends, the theatre, the rumpus of a party, girls... At the end he amended, almost aloud: "Thanks, Mars—I hope. I'll always love you, of course..."

The doctor, professional, friendly, and a little rough, gave Guthrie a bed to sleep in for a while, after he had told some of his story. Later, the examination was performed. Then came the demanded frankness, the slow shaking of the head: "You're healed up inside, Guthrie. You're all right—for Mars. On Earth you *might* last a year without another breakdown, but I doubt it. Professor Landron we can send home—if he really wants to go. Not you: there's not enough sound muscle tissue left, ever to stand up under Earthly gravity. I'm sorry..."

Guthrie's face, with the wide mouth, strong jaw, and deep-set grey eyes, didn't change. In spite of optimism, he had still kept himself braced for a

jolt like this. "Well, I know now, Doctor," he said. "Thanks."

4



UT HIS internal battle was not so easily won as that. Guthrie wandered out into the street, aware of the maturing summer of polar Mars, the haze; the soft colors; the flatness; the low-swinging sun; the faintly-

wavering fronds of strange vegetation, beyond the bleak aspect of the town, itself. He had loved what was here; and yet how close are love and hate together? Words were in his mind: *Gift-life—and be grateful. This, or a marker on a hillside, remember? But is it that easy to reason with feelings? With the fact of exile? What do I do now? Try to fit in, here at the settlement, or wander back to my locked ship and my archeological and biological specimens, and try to work things out in my own lonesome way? Well, at least I'm at the settlement...*

He walked up and down the street a few times, trying to feel the mood of the place. It seemed lost, asleep, limited, provincial. Men, and a few women, worked under the plastic roofs of the hydroponic gardens that grew terrestrial vegetables. A truck came into town, loaded with a starchy Martian fruit that he knew. He watched another truck jog shakily over a trail, back toward a deep pit, where the ancient past of this planet was being brought to light.

Guthrie shrugged, and walked toward the airlock of a building which bore a sign, saying: "Municipal Welfare, South Search. What a name for a village! Yeah—South Search!..."

He went inside. The girl behind the rough counter was rather pretty. Her

hair was yellow as corn—lighter than her browned skin—and it looked very soft. She might have been beautiful, except for a hard and flippant poise of jaw. She looked aggressively cheerful—or was that just bravado? And what did a girl want on Mars, anyway? Some crazy romanticism—some thoughts not too different from those of his own boyhood—had brought her here, no doubt. Right now, Guthrie's attitude was cynical.

His face must have gone sour, now, he knew. But he removed his helmet politely.

"Hi, Mister," the girl said; but behind the casual greeting was a flaunting air which announced her dislike of him on sight. And did he care? "What will it be?" she asked.

"A place to sleep, and a job to do, Miss," he answered; "I'm not very particular."

"Then you'll be easy to take care of, Mister," she told him. "Sign your name here..."

She countersigned the slip, and gave him the carbon copy. Marion Tandan was her name. "The barracks are just past the museum," she said. "And at half past eight—in three hours—there'll be a little gathering at the new recreation building. For some people such things are fun; I'm supposed to tell newcomers about our social events."

"Thanks," Guthrie said stiffly.

Sitting on a narrow bunk, under a curved steel roof, he wrote a letter to Charlie Bonner, his physician friend: "...I'm in perfect health—for Mars—Charlie... Now I'm trying to get used to the idea, and square myself around..." He dropped the letter in the house-box; it would go out by tiny unmanned mail-rocket, that travelled very fast.

GUTHRIE ate well enough at the community mess-hall. At the rebuilding, music from recordings lifted

nostalgically, and a few couples danced. In South Search, women were much in the minority. Men moved around, talking—drinking a mild brew made from the stalks of an aromatic Martian plant. There were hard young chaps, looking rustic in spite of the intellectual mark. Guthrie heard one say to another with subdued rapture: "The Manner ing Fellowship—six whole months I can spend on this planet. Think of it!..." But the other answered: "Yeah—maybe you'll want to go home, Dave—before it's over..."

In his bitter mood, Guthrie smirked inside himself. Only six months... Time and freedom made a lot of difference.

There were other older men, looking learned and somewhat preoccupied. One grinned and said, "Oh, yes—you're Guthrie, the newcomer who brought poor Landron in. That makes us appreciate you more, Guthrie. Many come and go; I hope that you find what you came for. We, on Mars, are all a rather strange breed, I'm afraid, or we would not be here. There is a personal quest always involved."

Guthrie's smile was bright and cold. "I suppose so," he said.

Some minutes later he caught Marion Tandran, momentarily without a dancing partner, and said, "Have you wind enough left to favor me, too, Miss Tandran?"

She nodded almost formally. "Though perhaps I shouldn't," she commented. "Because—maybe you're not very nice. You blew in on your own power. You can always leave the same way..."

So Jay Guthrie sensed how much she was groping for something, too, that eluded her—her swift and not-quite-fair defiance of him betrayed her own failure. Momentarily he restrained his own irritation.

"Yes—maybe I *could* leave," he said. "I'll try to be more agreeable and abstract—honestly. But why are you

here, I wonder? Why is anybody here—when, superficially, Mars doesn't seem to offer much, except to the archeologist, the biologist, and the abstract scientist? It's a cold desert world with an atmosphere unable to sustain human life. It's long past its prime, and not—one would think—a very good place to live. There are archeological treasures, worth money—sure; but that is a small item, economically. There aren't even any ore-deposits that aren't surpassed in value on Earth, minus the need of hauling them so far. So what have we—here?"

As they danced, Marion Tandran caught his eyes with a hard look. "You promised to be nice, and now you're trying to rib me, Guthrie," she accused. "Because you've got the answer, or you never would be here, either. It's the distance—beyond the hill, or the sky. The unknown, and learning about it, and making it part of ourselves—fitting in. There's that restless instinct in our human minds and nerves. Maybe Mars is worth little, in a material way; but it always had an appeal, and the hint of a promise beyond that. Dealing with unknowns, you can't be crass and materialistic, Mr. Guthrie, and ask what a place or thing is good for, before you search and learn and find out! So, let's drop the whole subject, and quit pretending to be friends!"

She broke away from him, then. And had he seen, at the last moment, tears glistening in her eyes? So it was clearer that she wasn't as experienced, here, as she pretended. She was young and unsure, and hadn't been here very long, and hadn't found what she wanted. The mood, the magic, or whatever it was, had slipped through her fingers.

Guthrie wanted to apologize to her, while they thought things out together. But his own disorientation came in the way. What could he, caught on Mars, say to a sound and free girl from

Earth, anyway? Their paths weren't the same.

"Go home, Miss," he advised, both with gentleness and honesty, and yet with some bitterness of his own. "You don't belong here. Maybe nothing human does; maybe Mars was never made for people."

He shrugged, grimaced, and stalked back across the floor.

AFTER THAT his life was work and sleep and thought, while summer crept toward an end. Green vegetation began to turn russet and red and tawny. The sun would dip briefly beneath the horizon in promise of stark nights to come, bringing twilight and killing cold. Guthrie helped harvest edible Martian fruits. But since toil was rotated to avoid routine, he also worked in the shops, and at constructing new buildings, and over the machines that electrolyzed water to supply the habitations with oxygen to breathe, and that recharged the air-rejuvenator cartridges used in the helmets while afield. And like everyone else—including, of course, Armand and Gladys Springer, the very young and very earnest pair of archeologists—he dug in the deep pit, where more of Martian civilization was coming to light. One of the last cities had been there.

In his toil, Guthrie often lost some of his bitterness, regaining temporarily his old enthusiasm and wonder. Many strange and yet curiously-familiar devices were uncovered—a steam turbine; a lathe; a brightly-glazed piece of pottery, worth a fortune on Earth; a photograph in color, found preserved in a sealed cylinder. It pictured a steel-blue sky, placid water gleaming, a great red-leaved tree, a glass roof, a crystal tower; a platform on which a ship meant for space, crouched, its weapons streamlined into its ugly black hull. The Mars of millions of years ago, that was—the Mars

that had fought the neighboring planet, Five, and had blown it to bits, to produce the scattered fragments of the Asteroids—its own dominant species, skeletally represented only by the spirad bone of a helical rib-cage, dying in the same conflict.

Sometimes Guthrie would get into a conversation with one or another of the leading citizens of South Search—Lineway, Schmidt, or Corson, who was long and lean and nearing fifty, said: "We've learned a lot here in the south this summer, Guthrie. Soon we'll go to the north polar regions again, to another springtime, and to our still frosted-in town there, to have another summer—we hope as good as this one. You see, on Mars, we migrate like birds, with the seasons. I hope you'll be with us, Guthrie..."

Guthrie mouthed his thanks, wishing that he was like these older specialists—devoted solidly to their studies, without inner conflict. But by now he was sure that he would not go with them. He was strongly tempted to rocket back to Earth, straight into the teeth of inevitable consequences. Mars was still in his blood, but here only half of him was ever satisfied. On Earth there was a potential few months of normalcy—comfort, civilization, old friends... Maybe that was better than a lifetime, here...

5



BUT HIS choice had already gone in another direction; Guthrie would stay on Mars. That was more sensible, even though the people here were set apart from him by their freedom to come and go. It was best not to be reminded so much of that. He

had that liking for solitude, too—it was that other side of him. He might return to his ship and fly north, alone. He might even stay here in the south, while the gathering hoarfrost and the awful cold hemmed him in. He had extensive supplies—his knew his way around by now; he was as independent as a wandering bear. Time would not be without satisfactions. But deep within him he felt the flaunting recklessness, which seemed half to reach—subconsciously—for an end of things. That annoyed him; yet, maybe it was as it should be. Space and Mars had given him life. To lose it again to the winter or to the deserts of this strange, fading planet, could seem poetic. Guthrie laughed to himself, deriding this thought. Yet it remained, like a weariness, balanced by starshot dark and quiet, fingered with hoarfrost and the Martian Aurora. Was it Mars-madness, like poor Landron's?

Already an hour of night had lengthened to two, from which this region of the south emerged again to the sun, its crumpled plants bearded with white. And already the Howlers were blowing—signs of winter on Mars. The Howlers were hollow sporepods of certain growths; after the spores were scattered, the frigid wind blew through the empty shells and made an eerie whistling.

Guthrie continued to see Marion Tandrán around—in the mess-hall or rec-building, or elsewhere. Among only three hundred people, it was hard to keep away from each other.

"Are you still here, Mr. Guthrie?" she once snapped. Her tone was a mockery which said "You big ape!" clearer than words.

"It seems so, Miss Poison," he growled, and walked away.

But often he found himself thinking about her or watching her, and regretting deeply that things were not different. He was doing that once in the rec-building, when she came over

to him with a new timid smile on her face, and said: "You were right, Guthrie; I'm licked. There's too much Earth in my bones, in spite of the soaring dreams. I'm like the other punks that come and go. If folks were all like me, space would stay empty of people. When the ship leaves for Earth the day after tomorrow, with Landron and the other crackups on it, I'll be aboard. Here's my ticket..."

She waved a large envelope. In her humility and defeat, she still had sweetness, now—a humor, and a certain dignity.

Guthrie looked at her in earnestness and wonder for a long moment, before he said, "I've been a grouch, but I'll miss you. Still it's best—you're being smart. Home is quite a place... Care to take a walk—sort of hunt for a special mood?" He pressed her gloved hand as a friend. He thought of kissing her, but what good was that? All around, he felt pretty futile.

"All right," she said. "Let's walk."

THEY WERE a mile out of town when the setting sun touched the horizon. The whole scene looked tawny. For a moment there was a flurry of fine snow, as a cirrus cloud, low-lying and yellowed with dust, moved overhead.

As the sun was about to dip, Marion said: "People get trapped by the way they feel. Mars is beautiful, but it's a hellhole of loneliness and difference, too. It grinds at your nerves—though it *ought* to be all right. People can win a living from its soil, while they study and add to human knowledge. Of course it's inconvenient to wear air-helmets outside all the time, but you should get used to that—like wearing overcoats at home in winter. And next year they'll have swimming-pools, even, in both the north and south towns. Oh, darn—why haven't I ever been able to feel right, here—though I've been fascinated? Something is

lacking. What would a person who *had* to stay here, do?"

Guthrie scowled into the quick star-flecked dusk. "I'm trying to imagine," he replied. His throat felt a big tight; it seemed to him that Marion Tandran represented the last human gentleness that he would ever know. The last and the best.

"Now is somehow special and final, Guthrie," she said. "It needs to be celebrated by some small gesture. I have what I call a house of my own; they've given me that. We could have coffee, there. It could even be dinner... I haven't started packing, yet..."

They walked back slowly, under the stars. Beyond her private airlock, seated in a chair made of rough Martian stalks, his eyes wandered as he waited for Marion to bring coffee. And it was as though he imagined some special blend of feelings. There was a mat of varicolored fibre on the floor, and curtains of the same local material over the small, double-glazed windows. She must have made these things herself. There was a table of packing boxes. From atop a rack which held a few books, a real cat peered down at Guthrie inquisitively, purring. A little brown Martian animal, fuzzy like a great caterpillar but far more active and intelligent, twittered musically, and made its rotary cage spin. A tall stalk, rooted in a red-glazed jar millions of years old, reached for the ceiling. A clock ticked softly.

Just for that moment, it seemed that this was not a transient hour of good-bye, but a lifetime of contented permanence. Even the muted wailing of the Howlers seemed to match the rest of the mood perfectly. The harsh, murked future seemed laid aside.

When Marion came with the coffee, he said with a puzzled and rueful grin, "It's here. In this room."

"What's here?" she demanded.

"Enough of the warmth of Earth to

make me satisfied with Mars," he said half-jokingly. "My two conflicting sides coming to terms. Home to relax in, wherever I am—here, or farther away, even. So it could be—like having the universe. And aren't other people much the same as me? So isn't it like the whole human race being at home, even among the farthest stars? This I didn't expect to find. I wonder how many know?"

Guthrie still grinned, only partly serious.

Marion Tandran studied him. "I'm glad you like my quarters," she said at last. "When I go, you can have them."

He was startled by the quick swirl of his thoughts. "But that's no good at all!" he protested. "Not the same thing; the spirit would be out of it, with you gone!"

HE SAW HOW her face lighted, and he wished desperately that this much hadn't slipped out of him—because he wanted to be kind. "Look, Marion Tandran," he protested. "You're tops to me—and I'm cussed enough not to want to advertize my physical infirmities. But I'm not on Mars just for science or fun; I *can't* leave, so I'm no good to you..."

She studied him again. "Don't tell me, Guthrie," she said at last. "I heard the whole story yesterday, from a friend of mine who is a nurse at the hospital. Coming out here alone and sick—for a purpose. I don't think anybody ever showed more courage. And I *wanted* to stay on Mars. But doing that would have to mean finding a way to make peace with it—feeling at home, here. Like with lots of people, home means a person to me. All right—to strangers I don't care to show too much of my inner thoughts, either. But I can stand it. Now, for heaven's sake—don't say anything just for the sake of being gallant!"

Jay Guthrie got slowly to his feet.

His face stayed almost stern as he came toward her. "Don't worry, Marion—I won't—I don't have to. I just ask you again, to be sure. Otherwise, I love you; I want you to marry me. I think I always knew we were alike, groping in the same direction..."

He held her hand in his, and now he drew her to him. Two neglected cups of coffee steamed and gave off their aroma on the table.

Outside, the frigid wind made the Howlers whistle. At last Marion chuckled against Guthrie's shoulder. "Good-bye ticket to Terra," she said. "And I guess we won't get to fly north with the others—to another spring. At least not during the first month."

"What do you mean?" he asked.

"Oh, there's a rustic local custom, started, they say, a Martian year ago, when the Springers, Armand and Gladys, got hitched out here. Somebody has to watch 'he town through the winter—see that the machines and everything stay in order. A different pair of people—usually men, of course—takes over and is relieved each month. But newlyweds, if there are any, are supposed to get the first turn."

Jay Guthrie laughed long and contentedly. Then he reached for the cooling coffee and said, "A toast to the custom..."

THEY WERE married a day after the Earth-rocket departed. Several days later, Guthrie was flown out by helicopter to bring his own ship to town. Other craft were readied and provisioned to fly the people from South Search to North Search. And the final mail rocket to arrive this year at the former place, glided, spitting flame, to the frost-whitened landing stage. It was Professor Carson who happened to bring the mail to the Guthrie's airlock.

"It's a little early to receive congratulations by mail, Jay," he laughed.

Guthrie read Charlie Bonner's letter first. It wasn't typed; it was written in a big, square hand: "...So you're stranded on Mars—for now, Jay... I'm terribly sorry; but much has come out of your success. Aside from your part, we have a ship with a very low-accelerating speed, suitable to transport the very sick. It's gentle—it takes a full hour to reach orbital velocity—about five miles per second. And out there, to circle the Earth like a little moon, we're building a hospital—to treat cases like your own, and others—away from all gravity! We've named the method after you—because it's yours... As for your being unable to leave Mars, could you possibly endure it for three—at most, five—years? I know it's an awful sentence, but a means will surely be found to build up those weak cardiac muscles... Then you can come back..."

Just then Marion called, "Shall we say goodbye to our friends, Jay? They're about to take off for the north..."

IN A LITTLE while the Guthries were alone again, in their house. The sun had set, almost for the final time till the distant Martian spring. Meteors, and the low-hanging Martian aurora flamed. The Howlers whistled and the hoarfrost thickened in the awful cold. But in that small house, banked with soil and warmed by atomic heat, it was snug. Lights burned softly, the air-system whispered. The cat was curled up on the rug.

Jay Guthrie read Charlie Bonner's letter, again, while Marion looked over his shoulder. "Proud?" she asked.

"Guess I am," he chuckled. "I used to feel useless, and that was bad."

"In a month we'll be in the north—with the spring, again," she said. "And I suppose that, in five years, a vacation on Earth will seem fine..."

"I guess so," he mused absently.

He thought of the Martian machines

he could tinker with here in the museum. And of the carvings and fossils and specimens of preserved plantlife that had to be catalogued. And he thought of the bleak, magnificent solitude—with home around him. Marion and he were both of the same studious turn of mind. They both loved the strangeness of Mars, and together they were at home with it. They would

have been at home anywhere. That was like a special triumph of man's gradual conquest of space.

He squeezed Marion's hand. "For my part, Honey," he laughed, "we could stay here in the south all winter."

And just then, neither of them seemed to care, either way, about the promised freedom in five years.

Readin' and Writhin'

ONE, by David Karp. Vanguard, 311 pp., \$3.50.

Arthur Koestler's "Darkness at Noon" (Macmillan, 1941), probably the key novel of our century, defined the modern problem of conscience so sharply and explored it with such thoroughness that George Orwell, in his brilliant "1984" (Harcourt, Brace, 1949) had only to expand and project it. The conflict is the same. Ingsoc is only the Russian socialist state carried one step further; Winston Smith is the heir of the old Bolshevik, Rubashov; and even his occupation, in the Ministry of Truth, derives from one sentence in "Darkness at Noon":

...Rubashov remarked jokingly to Arlova that the only thing left to be done was to publish a new and revised edition of the back numbers of newspapers.

In the shadow of this double monument, David Karp, the Vanguard Press, the Book of the Month Club and Clifton Fadiman have combined their forces to lay a brick.

The plot of "One" can be stated briefly: A man named Burden, professor of English at Templar College in an unspecified country, at some unspecified future time, is also a part-time informer for the nameless authoritarian government of that country. Himself examined for heretical beliefs, he is found guilty; whereupon the Department of Internal Examination (the Oppu of the setup), decides to convert him. Partly because Lark, the D. I. E. inquisitor, is an amateur compared with Ivanov and O'Brien—and partly because Burden (in the author's opinion, though his own evidence does not support him) is made of tougher stuff than Rubashov or Smith—they succeed only by wiping out all their victim's memories and substituting new ones. Even then, the success is temporary: the new Burden, rechristened Hughes, sins again and has to be destroyed.

In this particular, "One" turns to an older model: Burden is redeemed, whereas the point made by "Darkness at Noon" and "Nineteen Eighty-Four" is precisely that for the 20th-century Faust there is no redemption, and no hope.

It would be pleasant to suppose that Karp is right, Koestler and Orwell wrong; even pleasanter to find the case argued plausibly.

But Lark's despair, when he discovers his failure with Burden, is unreal; the point is curiously pointless: the State does not stand or fall with Burden, as Lark inexplicably believes. Like Rubashov, like Smith, Burden is a member of a vanishing class, a man old enough to remember another state of affairs and another set of values. The Rubashovs are replaced by Gletkins—the "Neanderthals" with no memories and no traditions, "a generation born without umbilical cord"; the Smiths are replaced by eager-beaver Parsons; and the Burdens by the dehumanized young Church of Staters, honest, conscientious and unimaginative, who never say "I."

This latter invention, although it vitiates Karp's whole argument, is one of the chief virtues of his book; the description of the Church of State meeting is oppressively real. Similar flashes of poetic insight occur here and there: Burden's childhood fear of being turned to stone if his father looked at him in anger, and his rage at the addition of fresh water to artificial flowers are true touches; they go deeper than logic; they're viscerally compelling. But in this long book, there aren't enough of them to go around.

One sentence of Clifton Fadiman's glib testimonial is worth quoting here: "Without any concession to sentimentality, Mr. Karp leaves us fascinated, exhausted, scared—but by no means despairing."

I'll buy that, all but one word. The book is fascinating; it has the one essential re-

[*Intro to page 62*]

People have endured numerous irrational and suicidal cultures, because someone was able to say, "Aw, t'ell with it!" at just the right time . . .



For a moment, the two figures just stood and stared...

SMALL WAR

by Jerome Bixby

(illustrated by Milton Luros)

OBVIOUSLY he agreed with me that it was the thing to do—absolutely the only thing. Looking back across the years to that cold, snow-blowing day on the iceball, this simple fact is my greatest consolation whenever I begin to think of all the wonderful things Earth may have lost as a result of my action. All we might have learned—

But he concurred.

I suppose he must wonder sometimes too, if he's still alive. It happened so quickly, so spontaneously—almost before we knew what we were doing. I suppose he must sit by the fireside as I do—if he has fires on his planet—and speculate on all he may have lost to that planet in one moment of decision: a cure for some dread disease; some technological gimmick to fill a slot; some valuable so-

biological concept...who knows? All these are things I wonder about, surely, and more.

But it was the thing to do; I did it, and he did it, and all without one single word being exchanged—though naturally we couldn't have discussed the matter even if we'd felt a need to, not knowing each other's tongues.

Don't think it wasn't painful, though. It was the hardest thing I've ever done in my life; it was agony. But I'm glad I did, and I don't give a damn what you think about it.

As for now, I see no harm in telling the tale. I'm too old to be hurt by censure. I've loafed on my pension for forty years now, and done all the reading and bad landscape-painting and deep-sea fishing I ever wished to; and now the doctors say I haven't much time left. So I'm going to tell what happened one hundred and eighty-five years ago on the iceball, and one of my great-great-grandchildren—who is a newsman—will see that it gets around. Then you who are reading this will probably curse me for a fool or even a traitor—so here and now I extend my own very heartiest curses to those who will curse me. The devil with you all—I did what I thought was wisest, and I'd do it again.

And so would he, I'll bet.

I was young, then—seventy-six, healthy, tough. The year was 2419. I was a Starman—one of those vital, restless, maladjusted specimens they sift out of the mainstream of college grads, and mold, train, strip of 51% of their humanity, give a colonel's rank and send out to explore the Galaxy in sixty-foot multi-C-drive ships.

On May 12, 2419—I'd never forget that date, even if I didn't have microfilms of my old ship's logs; though you can be damned sure the logs don't contain this story—on May 12 I was in Messier 13, prowling through a clump of unnamed stars I had bypassed in my examination of the likelihoods (F and G stuff, mostly). I was

looking for intelligent life; for worlds that could be profitably colonized; for any and all off-beat data to be added to our growing understanding of the physical universe. I was biologist, physicist, chemist, anthropologist, psychologist all wrapped up in one six-foot-four hard-muscled, hard-brained bundle. I'd trained for forty years, and been on the job only fifteen—and maybe that's why I did what I did: I was also young enough to be idealistic.

THE NEEDLE withdrew from my arm; I came out of hypnosleep right in the middle of my favorite symphony. Sourly, I looked out my port to see what kind of sun had prompted my ship to wake me up.

Red dwarf—an old, sullen devil. A glance at a dial told me there were six planets, two of them gas-giants, another a crisp cinder hustling around within four million miles of the sun. They were out, naturally. The other three—

I pushed the button marked *LAND*, ate some cold roast beef left over from my last waking—too damn lazy to set the autocook half the time—and held out my arm for the hypo again: we were on planetary drive now, and it'd be several days before we made planetfall: might as well rest. Besides, *Mozart interruptus* is enough to drive a man mad.

My ship chose the iceball to land on first: high albedo. It wasn't all iceball, of course—one of those one-revolution to one-year affairs. The twilight zone was -90°, and that's where my ship set down, true to its tapes.

The needle again. I came up out of sleep, still tasting the roast beef, and got my first look out the port at this unnamed planet of an unnamed sun where I was to commit one of the most unthinkable acts in the history of mankind.

Cold and white; ice-cliffs; forty-foot drifts; leaden skies; scudding clouds, with that dying sun riding an

ice-blue horizon like a far dusty garnet.

My ship had already run off a tape on the planet. The atmosphere was high on helium, but it would do. I ate again, took a shower and rubdown, got my heavy coldsuit from the suit-locker. Adjusted the mask—not an oxygen-mask, just protection against the cold—and checked my guns.

I paused in the airlock, in the flank of the ship. It was the damndest most unlikely planet I'd ever seen. Unlikely in the sense that here was a cloud that probably *could* support life—air and soil readings were all right, and the temperature wasn't too extreme—but it just didn't feel right. It had the dead, or never-even-lived, look; I'd seen a thousand that hit me that way, and never been wrong. I decided to give it an hour: if I didn't spot a shrub or a critter by then, the hell with it; the next one out had looked better, anyway.

I dropped out of the airlock. My A. G. unit floated me down twelve feet to the snow. I lit lightly, and started off in my cautious A. G. walk—if I hadn't had the unit at my belt, I'd have nailed myself into the bedrock: it was a small planet, but dense—lots of pull. Another argument against my finding anything interesting.

I stopped on a ridge about a mile away and made sure my ship was sending. It was: *dit—dit—dit*. I went on, and lost sight of it in minutes. The ridge gave onto a long ice-slope, which several miles farther on crumpled up into a welter of vein-blue canyons. It was snowing lightly, and the wind was frisking up—hard gusts that swayed me. I looked off in the direction it was blowing from, and saw a white wall about twenty miles off, churning massively, reaching up into the gray sky. Snow-storm. A big one—probably it had been wandering around and around the cold side ever since the planet shook down—the weather phe-

nomena of these one-spin one-year jobs are fascinating.

The white wall came nearer. I crunched along, ignoring it. My coldsuit was a home, if need be; plenty of food-capsules, a water-maker, disposal apparatus, central heating; a face-shield I could draw up if hard particles came along. If the seeing got too bad, I'd simply boost my A. G. to .1% and use my proton-pistols as reactors and home to the ship on the beam.

So I ignored the snowstorm, and pretty soon it was all around, whistling and roaring. Small snow; hard flakes. I kept going. I kept my eyes on the dials of my box—it would tell me if any kind of life, from ninety-foot monsters to a single bacterium, was within a dozen yards of me.

They didn't let out a flicker.

Dutifully I trudged along, my A. G. hoisting me ankle-deep in the snow. I'd always hated snow, and still do, preferring tropical climates and warm worlds. The small red sun appeared through the snow, then winked out again like a rat's eye. It hadn't moved from its spot on the horizon. It might move ten seconds of arc in a year, I thought—the planet was steady on.

Half an hour; not a flicker of life. I pointed the muzzle of the box right, left, down, up, probing with the tight-beam for anything that might lie outside the field. Nothing anywhere.

I started back, intending to give the other side of the planet a fast brush and then head for the next one. Farther out, but a brisk spinner. Warm.

NOW I'D BETTER fill you in on a few things. I don't know how well you studied your history-books—but I've noticed that even the history-books my grandchildren bring around tend to underplay the organized idiocy that prevailed on Earth before 2031.

You remember 2031; that's the year we finally built the edifice, proudly, on the stinking ashes of a dozen world

conflicts. We dedicated it, and we stood around looking up with admiring faces as if it were something we'd just dreamed up, instead of something we should've had brains enough to do centuries ago.

Well, by God, we *had* to, by that time. It was One World or Bust—with every nation on the planet possessing an alphabet of weapons capable of doing the busting. Italy's proton-cannon, for instance—the grandpa of the deadly sidearms I wore right now. Or America's cobalt bomb. Or Russia's mysterious ray that they could bounce off the Heavside with 100-square-mile accuracy. Or little Latvia, who surprised everyone in 2014 by suddenly thumbing her nose at the rest of us from the moon.

None of us would *use* our godawful weapons, of course. Goodness, no; we'd fight our wars like civilized people, with plain old tanks and rifles, or even with fists, rather than with—

Nuclear bombs or missiles or deadly rays. Or bacteria. Or ugly, unbelievable gases. Perish the thought!

Now, however, about our little disagreement—

Go out, my friend, and get into a fight with a guy. Get damn good and mad, and see that he gets plenty mad, too; then, if you're both packing guns...

Fists, hell.

So we revised the world and brought out a new edition, to the accompaniment of anguished bleats from the classicists. Morons yawned of national integrity, as if Earth were still divisible; idiots spoke doubtfully of limited war to achieve honorable ends, and maniacs shouted *war* to achieve all they desired.

And everyone with a grain of sense cried peace—for peace was at last unalterably equated with survival of *you*, not just of ten others guys.

Men who had spent millions constructing inside-of-mountain retreats

with thirty-foot walls came forward and threw their weight around—because thirteen nations had a pintsize missile that could vaporize mountains.

The peace was designed. With an eye to "country-states' rights"—that is, interior affairs were left alone, within reason. Scarcely anything was changed, in fact, except that the first country-state to go for its gun would simply cease to exist. By covenant.

So simple. Hardly anyone wants to die; scare a selfish man enough, and he'll outrun jaguars in changing his tactics. Scare a fool, and he'll follow.

Nice, peaceful world. It lasted for a few centuries.

Then the deep-seated aggressive drives which had always hounded Earthmen again demanded more dramatic release than the simple, successful living of a life; and, as always, misfits and psychopaths in the top echelons leaped to direct that release.

The common man was propagandized, indoctrinated, made pitifully enthusiastic. He was ready for action anyway by that time, having been unable to wallop hell out of strawmen for too long a time. *Lebensraum* was needed; and certain resources; and pre facto security against possible aggression.

Join the Navy and see the Solar System.

Unified Earth began its centuries-long brawl with its neighboring worlds. It conquered and conquered again. Easily. Five times, to be exact—the sum of Sol's intelligent life-forms to be subjugated. In fact races were easily awed or spanked into submission; older and wiser races stared in stupefaction as the sky rained maniacs.

I wonder if perhaps someday that drive will die out, weeded by Time from the mass-unconscious, or will at least express itself on saner levels: if the frantic need men feel to reassure themselves of their greatness—if not of their very existence—by carving

their initials across the Milky Way will vanish?

At any rate, we took Mars, and its quiet brown people. Venus, and its artistically brilliant amphibians. Ganymede. Titan. Callisto.

Then we tried for the stars.

We're still trying. No luck yet, that anyone *knows* about.

I WAS THINKING of all the above as I crunched through the snow of the iceball toward my waiting ship.

Oh, I'd been indoctrinated, all right, in case you're wondering. I was a good soldier. *Terra Uber alles*. Earth, the master, the missionary, the clod of Destiny.

But, as I've said, I was young enough to be idealistic.

Actually, I hadn't been conscious of being a rebel during my training-period and my first few years in space. But five years now—five years out in the star-clouds, all by myself, only my own thoughts for company, save for an occasional jaunt back to Sol for a breather...it was a lot like waiting for zero-hour on an old-time battlefield, I guess: in all that loneliness you get near yourself, and you begin to wonder: *why?*

I crunched along, glancing at the dials on my box now and then, and wondering: *why?*

In Des Moines, we manufacture a deodorant powder for Venusians, prescribed by law, in order that they may avoid offending Earthmen.

I crunched along.

The little Mart'ian villages have vanished. Ugly and unsanitary. Shining steel towns, now.

Snow under my feet, and silent dials.

Ganymedians now function on a twenty-four hour day. They seem to have trouble adjusting to this schedule, possibly due to the fact that they evolved on the planet.

Snow. Motionless needles on dials. Red sun through the thinning storm,

throwing a bloody glow against the ice-ridges ahead of me.

Of course, there are practical considerations. Mars' mineral wealth. Venus' undersea store of radioactives. Titan's value as a laboratory and observatory. And I must say that Earth administers her Empire capably.

Don't all tyrannies? At first, at least? Build beautiful roads?

The pitfall will come...and the devil with you all, once again. *I* won't be around to see it. Mars, with its barbed tentacles not yet raised; the knife-edged teeth of Venus; the sharp little hoves of Ganymede...don't you think we're due to get our lumps? Don't you think there are under-grounds? Don't you think they're learning? Don't you think they *hate*?

What *fools* we are...we should have gone as friends...

I see, looking at the above, that I have allowed my emotions to get the better of me. But really, when I think of the dilly I put over on the iceball planet, I choke up inside—that ambivalent sort of feeling, where you want to howl with laughter and at the same time are half-strangled...maybe by fear? Fear of punishment? Or by regret, or feelings of guilt, as if you were recalling a delightful but scurrilous seduction?

I don't know. In a way, what I did was criminal. It was the deliberate scuttling of a great moment, the rape of a stream of thought and effort that had been building toward that moment, motivated by scientific curiosity and now by imperialism, for many centuries. It was a pigeonholing of history. But history repeats itself—and at least *my* hands are clean. Let the far future take care of itself.

I was crunching along, rather boredly, when the dials on my box went crazy.

I STOPPED in my tracks and peered ahead of me, instantly tense, pre-

pared for anything, my proton-pistol ready, clicked on, humming. All I could see was rushing, swirling snow—the thick tail-end of the storm was on me.

I was about halfway back to my ship by now... ahead of me, as I recalled, lay a wide, shallow gully, then the long ice slope, then the high blue ridge beyond which lay the ship.

Slowly I swept the muzzle of the box in an arc before me. As it went to the right, the needles slammed hard into position.

The hair along the back of my neck stiffened; life was coming toward me.

Monster?

Mouse?

Mountainous?

Miniscule?

I took a reading, and almost dropped the box. I blinked in utter, appalled disbelief.

I read the dials again, with utmost care, checking the figures against the tables in my mind, number by symbol, number by symbol. It was impossible.

The dials said that the life I had detected was human.

I checked the little dial on the side of the box, to see if the damned thing had slipped a cog and was registering me. It wasn't—my personal jitters were screened out, as always.

I took a step forward in the blinding snow, pistol aimed at the spot the dials indicated. At that moment the snows parted, and I saw a far-off figure on the other side of the gully.

He wore a coldsuit; he carried a gun, and a box—which he was reading as I'd read mine.

The snows closed down again, leaving me standing there flat-footed, jaw hanging behind my mask, thinking, *Well, I'll be utterly damned!*... and trying to imagine, while the dizzying impossibility of the moment was still strong in me, the mathematical chances of one Starman like myself running

into another Starman working the same corner of the Galaxy.

The chance was vanishingly small, but Fate had turned a microscope on it and turned it up in all its fantastic improbability. Thousands upon thousands of stars in Messier 13. Lord knows how many planets, and how many square miles of terrain on those planets.

Out of this infinitude of places to be, he and I had wound up on the same square acre at the same minute. The same century would have been unbelievable enough!

They'll never believe this, I thought. Not even when we both report it. They'll think it's a rib...

Another hole in the snow. I waved at the approaching figure. The snows closed in, opened up again, streaming past him—the fall was getting thicker.

He waved back.

I shouted, against the wind, "Hi!"

He shouted back, but I couldn't make out his words.

We each stepped off our respective sides of the gully at the same time, our A. G.s floating us down the white slopes as we sought to get to each other and shake hands and pound backs and say, *Lord, it just can't have happened! I'm AG-1279-13-A... who're you?*

The snow again. Rushing whiteness. When they swept aside, we were within twenty feet of each other.

I think the sense of *wrongness* hit us both at about the same instant. I stopped. He stopped. Suddenly there was an iciness along my back that this gray snowball of a world couldn't account for.

The gestalt *Terran Starman* crumbled. It was the biggest shock of my life, I guess. I can hope for no other moment more stunning, more thrilling, more shot through with mystery and import.

He was an alien. A star alien. So, of course, was I.

HIS COLDSUIT... there were small differences. The cut wasn't quite the same. It was bulkier—or else he was. The fabric was not brown, like mine, but grayish. His box was not of steel but of some dull yellowish metal, and bore a short aerial or antenna—different principle, evidently. His gun was an alien whirl in his hand.

We stood there for about five seconds, each a bird and a snake. His eyes, long and goldish and slanting upward, were as wide and startled as mine were.

Then we did an absolutely preposterous thing. There we were, two highly intelligent beings, star travelers, representing two civilizations which were quite obviously scouting the galaxy (I didn't think for one moment that he was a native of the iceball... the suit, the box, the A. G. unit)... moreover, two civilizations which were similar if not virtually identical in many areas.

Know what we did?

As if our strings had been cut simultaneously, we dropped flat on the snow and became almost invisible to each other. I squalled. I think he did, too. I was trembling violently. My eyes were bugging. I recall that I was sticking my tongue out till it pressed the fabric inside my mask, as if to reject the whole thing.

I was on one side of a low, flat snowdune. He was on the other side of it.

There we lay.

The snow pushed across the top of the gully, an almost horizontal white-rushing wall above us—the storm was lashing its tail; the wind screamed, and so did my mind. And his, I'll bet.

Representatives of two space-conquering peoples, we lay and practically wet our pants.

A minute passed. I was thinking: *A humanoid... a humanoid! In a cold-suit! Carrying a box, like me! Oh, no... I must have been seeing things!*

Some kind of mirage...

Another minute.

Hell, yes, I must've been seeing things.

I poked my head up.

He had gotten the same idea at the same time. We widened our eyes at each other and ducked again.

...He *was* there; and I was. Together we were an impossibility. It wasn't much help to run over in my mind all the arguments against the likelihood of duplication of human form in even the *same* environment, much less in that of some distant alien world... Good Lord, the complex of factors! And it did no good to wonder at the mathematical probability of our encountering each other in this manner—

It had happened. And it was stupefying. It was totally unexpected and unpredicted... I had run across all sorts of lower life-forms in my explorations, and had thought myself blasé... but to stumble over an alien who was practically a mirror-image...

All right, so I'm belaboring the point; you're probably just as shocked as I was. Well, I'm going to shock you a damnsight more.

In fact, I can almost cut my story short. It's not really a story, anyway—I'm just telling you what happened. Straight reporting. Take it or leave it.

We lay there, and I began to feel pretty silly. Snow was in my face. I shifted, snorted, felt still sillier. And after a while I got an idea. I would try to show the alien that I was inclined to be friendly.

I LIFTED my proton-pistol, pointing its conical barrel at the rushing, boiling clouds of snow that swept across the top of the gully. Pointing it thus, I raised it above the level of the snowdune that separated us.

I held it there, hoping he wouldn't blow my hand off.

After a moment, I raised my head

too. Again we widened our eyes at each other. He'd been staring at my pistol.

He blinked and ducked down again.

Turning over on my back, I aimed the pistol at a snowbank some sixty feet from me and pulled the trigger. The bank hissed into white vapor, with a red flash.

Three seconds later, a snowbank on the alien's side of our dune hissed into vapor, with a green flash.

So far, so good. I couldn't help grinning. He was fast on the uptake.

Now came the important part.

I held the pistol up again, looking over the top of the dune. I waited until the top of his head, then his long slanting bright-gold eyes came up.

I tossed my pistol onto the white dune between us; and waited.

His strange whirl of a pistol followed a moment later, came to rest close to mine.

We looked at each other, eyes across the whiteness.

I let out a long shivery breath and stood up. He did too. We mounted our respective sides of the dune, light on our A. G.s, and walked toward each other.

I held out my hand, wondering if the gesture would mean anything to him. He gave me a strong handclasp.

Maybe the most important thing that happened that gray, white-rushing day on the icball was the fact that I laughed aloud when I saw his *other*

whirl-gun clasped to his belt. And that he laughed when he saw the twin to my proton-pistol holstered at *my* belt.

But it isn't important *now*. Nobody will know how important it really is, as far as I'm concerned, for a thousand years—or however long it does take us to come into contact with his race again, whatever it is and wherever they're from.

We stood there. Two worlds. Shaking hands. With those guns at our belts.

And that's pretty much the way things stand now, one hundred years later. Realpolitik...and a shame...and a danger...

You say the above isn't true? Well, of course it isn't; we didn't let it happen. But it's what might have been.

Our eyes narrowed, and I lost my grin behind my mask. His eyes became speculative gold flames. We were trained, observant men. And equally thoughtful ones, evidently. We read each other in those few seconds. We read our similarities, our identities—in dress, in weapons, in purpose, even in the look in our eyes. We read each other's worlds. Sometimes I wonder if he, at least, did it telepathically.

Then I released his hand, stooped to pick up my gun, and passed by him on the way to my ship. I looked back once. He was looking back, too. Then the snow.

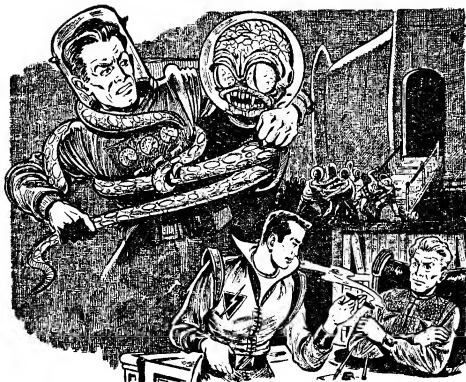


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The Supervisor spoke of Johnmartin's exploits in years past.

"It isn't that you haven't led a full life, Johnmartin. ... You've been everywhere, seen everything—life has been routine & colorless for you since the beginning of the fourth cell decomposition. What reason, then, could you have for wishing to continue a humdrum existence?"

MASS FOR MIXED VOICES

by Charles Beaumont

(illustrated by Milton Luros)

THE GARDEN suddenly hushed and Johnmartin looked up, puzzled, shears in hand. He listened. "What is it?" he asked of the mandrake, which wept; the mongrel mimosa hunched and began to tremble. Johnmartin frowned. "What do you sense, my friends? What disturbs you so?"

The door burst open, and uniformed

men came into the garden; they were not careful of the flowers and their boots were smelly with polish.

"What do you want?" asked Johnmartin. A man stepped forward.

"I am the District Coordinator," the man said, in a voice that shook the hybrid orchids and made them fade. "Why did you not answer the letters?"

"I saw no letters."

"You were issued eight; they were delivered to this Level and not returned. Why did you not answer them?"

"Because I didn't read them. I never read letters: they upset me."

"A bad and felonious practice," said the Coordinator. "There are laws governing false receipt of State mail. Under other circumstances I've no doubt you would be properly disciplined; however, I, for one, am inclined to leniency. It is a failing. Come now, we must go."

Johnmartin looked at the men and his brows furrowed. "What are you talking about?" he demanded. "What is the meaning of your entering my Level uninvited, damaging my plants, polluting the air? My taxes are paid, the rent is up to date. Leave me alone."

The Coordinator smiled. "But on this most glorious of all days... surely you haven't forgotten!"

Johnmartin dropped his shears. "What? No, no! Still, I haven't been keeping track very carefully; perhaps you are right, you probably are. Well then, in that case, gentlemen, I owe you an apology. I'd meant to speak to the Supervisor about this a long time ago, but what with one thing and another—" he gestured about the glassed multifloral garden "—as you can see, my time has been quite full. Now, if you'll be good enough to wait one moment..." He picked up the shears and delicately clipped a fungus from a Venusian agranosia blossom. "Nasty things: got to watch them. So, we'll straighten out this matter."

Johnmartin went into a small room and placed a heavier tunic about his shoulders: he returned and frowned briefly at the trailing vestalion which lay crushed beneath the men's feet, then he smiled. "Gentlemen, shall we leave? I can't be too long or there'll be no stopping the creepers."

The Coordinator glanced at his men, shrugged very slightly and led the way out of the garden.

And when the last had gone, a gentle questioning susurrus ran through the million growing things...

"**A**H," SAID the Supervisor, waving Johnmartin to a chair, "very glad to see you. After that mix-up with the mails, we were afraid that you'd become impatient—tried to 'jump the gun', as it were. An awful business: happened last Time—though, of course, the information is not widely known. Chap shredded himself in a machine. The very devil to piece together, as you can imagine, since he'd arranged for a fan to blow him all over. However, we soon had him as good as new and in top shape. But there's nothing of this sort here, eh? Everything in order, I take it, all ready?"

Johnmartin shook his head. He stated his request.

"Preposterous!" said the Supervisor. "Unheard of! Entirely without precedent! Perhaps you are mad?"

"No," said Johnmartin.

"No? Then you are joking? A mistake, yes, it must be a mistake." The Supervisor rifled swiftly through the pages of a fat brochure. "You are Johnmartin, XIX, Level IV, City?"

"Oh, yes."

"And you *are* in Golden Time?"

"Yes."

"Plus four months, twenty-two days?"

"I suppose so; I think your records are correct."

"Then I don't understand."

"It's very simple," said Johnmartin, though he began to feel uneasy, somehow, and tired. "You see, sir, I should prefer not to die."

"But that's—ridiculous!"

"I hadn't thought of it quite that way, sir."

The Supervisor snapped his finger-joints and fumbled in a box for a cigar. He lit the cigar. "Well, it is. Everyone wants to die."

"I don't."

"You surely cannot mean that. An extension—you wish an extension of a day or two? No? Good heavens, you want to go on living--forever?"

"Yes."

"I must think about this." The Supervisor slumped in his chair and pulled at his joints; he read the brochure carefully. "It's really the most extraordinary thing I ever heard," he mumbled.

Johnmartin became confused. He looked down at his hands and saw the way the sun fell upon them, turning the soft hairs to white over the rough grey gristle of flesh, shadowing the myriad wrinkles and embossing the dark blue veins; then he looked at the Supervisor, and hid his hands beneath his tunic. He wished to be back in his garden. But the wish was faint and was being rapidly replaced by memories long forgotten. Memories of wars and cities, jobs, philosophies. Reasons. He hadn't bothered with reasons for years: he had been content. Now he was being reminded, and it all seemed wearisome.

"Explain yourself," said the Supervisor abruptly.

"That isn't so easy," said Johnmartin; "I hadn't thought explanations would be necessary."

"You hadn't thought—See here, did you think that you could become the first immortal man in the history of the world, simply by walking into my office and requesting it?"

"Not exactly that, sir. I just didn't think there would be any objection. *Is* there an objection?"

"We will come to that presently. First, it would be of immense interest to me to hear the motives behind what you ask. It is the first time anybody has seriously asked it, you must know."

Johnmartin thought hard, trying to identify in order to convey. He opened his mouth several times.

"Come, come! Look at your record, man! It isn't, after all, as if you've

not lived a full life. Exemplary action in seven major wars; creditable Service in State functions for fifty years; a fine Level; hundreds of descendents—none mutants. . . . Why, it was you who averted, by dint of extreme patriotism, the uprising on Mars in '76!" The Supervisor rose from his chair and proceeded to pace the floor with his hands behind him. Incredulity retarded his speech. "Been everywhere, seen everything—life has been routine and colorless for you since the beginning of the fourth cell decomposition. What reason, then, could you have for wishing to continue a humdrum existence—an existence without benefit to you and of detriment to the System?"

Furiously and determinedly, Johnmartin tried to clear his head of the placid acceptance that had filled him for so long. He tried to locate words which could express what he so strongly felt.

"The sun rising every morning," he began, "does it thrill you?"

"I beg your pardon?"

No, no. It couldn't be done that way. Why hadn't he thought of these things before? Why had he permitted himself isolation to such luxurious extent? But, of course, there had been so much to do, so very much.

"Are you not exhausted? Do you not yearn for the peace, the rest of oblivion? In short, what does life offer you?"

THE MEMORIES swirled over him now, and the quiescence dispelled somewhat. He had had reasons clearly defined once, he recalled: there was the day he'd made the decision. But there had been no need to tell anyone of it then, so he had allowed it to become lost in its fulfillment.

The Supervisor said, "Wait a moment," and pressed a switch on his desk. A metallic voice answered: "Your honor."

"Find Mr. Guvney," said the Super-

visor, "and send him to my office immediately;" then: "I must be sure."

Presently a man in a white uniform entered the office, saluted and pulled a small machine on wheels over to Johnmartin's chair.

"Examine him. Let's get to the bottom of this."

Johnmartin submitted to the coils and handles and sparks.

"He is ready; the cells are in Four Stage and all but gone, sir."

"And he is not mad?"

"Why, no, sir."

"Very good. You may leave, Doctor."

The man left with his machine.

"Well?" asked the Supervisor, puffing his cigar.

"It's like this," said Johnmartin, for the reasons were seeping back in again. "If death is what any of the religions say it is, then I don't want it, because all the heavens sound dull and the hells worse. And if death is nothingness, I want it no more, because there is neither rest nor peace in nothingness. Oh, there was a time—long ago—when I wanted death, but I discovered the reason for that: it was because it seemed natural. But it isn't natural."

He was approaching it; this was part, anyway.

"I fought the wars, as you say, and married and had the allotted number of children—and when my wife had her Time, I was sad, but she wasn't. And I've loved, too, and served—all the things you say. For all the Time Stages. Then, I discovered something."

"Yes?"

"I discovered Johnmartin, XIX. Try to understand—"

"Get on with it!"

"The Tapes gave us a picture, which I believed, of two Goliaths: Science and Nature: and the picture shows a mighty struggle between the two. And since it seemed natural, I accepted the triumph of Science and rejoiced. But

then, after an assignment on Mercury, I came upon the relics left to me by my mother, Mary III. The relics were books, held in rot by plastic, but the pages were clear; and soon I learned to read—"

"What, books!" said the Supervisor, frowning. "I didn't know any existed. . . But you say you read these?"

"Yes. I was clever, then; don't ask how I managed this. Perhaps in my Transformation something was done to my brain. At any rate, I found another story of the two Goliaths: one I'd suspected but had never been able to pluck out. The story showed them not warring; instead, they walked together. I wonder what happened. . ."

"I fail to see—"

"And in the other times, do you know what destroyed men?"

The Supervisor pulled at his tunic impatiently.

"This: when the wisest of them discovered what I had, they were faced with death. So their tragedy was not mine, do you see? I was then only in Stage Two: I had life. There was a line in one of the books and it is my answer, sir. The line is, *'There is an eternity of wonder in a single rose petal'*. From that time, I've been doing just that."

"*Doing just what?*" The Supervisor lost control of his voice.

"Why, studying rose petals!" said Johnmartin. "A whole garden for a Stage of years: and, do you know, I'm only beginning to understand the simplest plants. How marvellously long before I understand Johnmartin, XIX!"

"You mustn't talk like that! Have you spoken of these things to anyone else?" The larger, handsome man applied a handkerchief to his forehead.

"I thought of it. Never have, however. Somehow, I imagine, I felt that sooner or later everyone would find out for himself. Better that way."

After a long pause, the Supervisor

said: "My dear fellow, I wonder if you've any idea of what you're saying."

JOHN MARTIN was annoyed. He couldn't understand the fuss and he wanted to get up and run back to his garden. But he was also tired, and he realized that in his happiness he had forgotten utterly about his body. With a shudder came the thought that, if the men had not come when they did to remind him, he might have... A sharp sensation he recognized as pain pierced his chest; for a moment he tasted the sensation, for it was new, then he decided that he didn't like it. He became conscious of his hands, wrinkled and transparent as his whole body. And his face! What did it look like?

The Supervisor was talking and parading nervously about the room, wringing his hands. "Consider only this one point," he was saying. "If it were possible, and we were at all inclined, to grant your request, and you were to speak to others and convince them—why, soon everybody might want to become immortal!"

Johnmartin smiled. "Well, wasn't that the original idea?"

"What do you mean?"

"Wasn't that why science was urged and pleaded with and pushed to perfect more and more ways of defeating man's eripplers and killers—first cancer, then heart-disease, then all the other ills? Wasn't the idea to immortalize the species? Why else was a method perfected whereby naturally-deteriorated body-cells could be replaced?"

"No! I'm sure that couldn't have been it. The idea is nonsense. Why, overnight the earth would be glutted; soon all the other planets it's possible to reach. We'd have to stop multiplying!"

"Yes, that's true," said Johnmartin, not wistfully. "We'd have to sit down

and study ourselves, and know ourselves, and start to receive life. Is there something wrong with that?"

"Standstill. Dead stop. No progress; nothing to build for—"

"—but ourselves."

"Selfish. Unspiritual."

Johnmartin walked to the window and looked out over the aseptic steel city. Placing an arm across his shoulder, the Supervisor spoke in a voice suddenly almost kindly.

"I think you are acting on a whim. Too much time alone, those foolish book-relics... You needn't be reminded of these facts, but in our system a death occurs but once every fifty years, on the average: the Time Stages were so arranged, as the Tapes tell us, by wiser men than we. Are we to disavow the divine, immutable law: Life-Death? And in doing so, eliminate the World Festival? Not to mention the Military Delegation's ceremonies—one of the greatest assets to peace."

"I'm sorry," said Johnmartin.

"Think! Think of the tourist trade that would be lost, *lost!* The shopkeepers would set up an unbearable howl. And I tremble to think of the reaction of the Universal Council of Churches, when they learn they must put off their World Wake for another half-century. The whole structure of the system would, in fact, be seriously impaired."

Johnmartin was silent. He thought of his garden and of his friends in the garden, his needy little friends who were even now withering, some of them, and falling...

The Supervisor went on more quickly, after consulting his wrist time-piece. "To disappoint these millions would be immoral and shameful; it would put an end to Unity. So look at it this way. In submitting gracefully, you serve all mankind!"

He doesn't understand, Johnmartin thought, he doesn't understand at all.

He doesn't see all his reasons melting before one small blade of grass. He doesn't understand, and I cannot make him do so.

"At 17:00 tomorrow the Festival begins. Delegates from all twelve planets plus adjoining satellites will be the first to greet you, personally. There will follow entertainment such as you've never dreamed of, such as a man enjoys only once in his lifetime! Wined, dined, showered with the plaudits and bon voyages of a happily envious world, until your heart is fit to burst with pride. Then, everyone gathers at the Square and there are appropriate, though short speeches from the 4H Clubs, the Church Council, etc., etc., while you recline in state amidst rare furs and silks. The Moment of Silent Prayer as you are administered a tasty liquid, to speed up cell decomposition; you slip quietly into a subtle languor of heavenly forecasts, the world cheers 'Farewell, Johnmartin!' and you are subsequently dismembered. Now then, old man, how does *that* sound?"

"Terrible," said Johnmartin, a tear in his eye.

"Ooohhh!" The Supervisor pressed numerous buttons on his desk. Two metal robots with metal tentacles rolled into the room, their sound-boxes crackling.

"Do not let this man out of your sight. He is to talk with no one other than myself. Escort him to his Level, give him ten minutes in his—garden!—and bring him back here." The Supervisor's eyes narrowed. He spoke to Johnmartin. "I regret that this has been necessary; but you have forced me to it. Your relatives have all been notified: they will be present in the Square tomorrow. They are proud and happy, Johnmartin; do not disappoint them as you have disappointed me."

The robots whisked Johnmartin out of the room and down the long grey hall.

WITHIN the glass cage which flew beneath the city, he tried to think of what had happened. But instead he thought of a man named Alexander, who had lived when the dust was mountains. Great Alexander, whose rage at Death for taking his friend Hephaestion was so profound that it caused him to enter a thousand homes and sacrifice a thousand lives. And there was the thin bearded man of dead years ago, whose assassination had filled the earth with mourning for countless generations...

He wanted to fight, to run away and wander alone through green fields and mountains and return to days of shrines and cemeteries, when death was despised. But he knew he could not. For where were the fields and mountains, now? You could not fight a world.

A voice. "Have we changed our mind?" There was genuine concern in the voice.

Johnmartin glanced at the sound-box of one of the robots. "No."

"I advise you to think, oh, very hard. It will be so much more pleasant if you see things our way."

A rebellious oath tore to Johnmartin's throat; then, calmly but immediately, and fully formed, it became a thought, which made him smile and say: "I will try," and after a pause: "Do you suppose one small favor might be granted me?"

The voice tingled. "Of course."

"May I have the ten minutes... alone? There is but one exit to my garden, and perhaps with the time to myself, to consider in a new light what you have said—"

"I will issue the instructions." The bulbs on the robots glowed briefly. "Your request will be carried out."

"Thank you."

You could not fight a world, but you might cheat it—with tricks it no longer remembered...

The cage stopped, then entered a different tube; soon they were at the



Level. The robots opened the door and wheeled through rooms, finally they came to the garden entrance. Tentacles disengaged hissingly.

Johnmartin hurriedly closed the door. His breath was coming with difficulty now and the sensation of excitement pulsed through his body. For a moment he stood looking at the flowers and listening to his heart.

"My friends," he said, "is this the way you greet me?" He crooked his finger and lifted a yellow rose. "But no, no! You mustn't all be so sad!"

The flowers answered in many ways.

The violet ombala pods huddled together; the Martian sandweed drooped; the Mandragoras sighed with nearly human voices; the crystal-sage, the tulips, all exfloreating sadness in soft ways...

Sunlight came upon Johnmartin and he smiled. Then he began to walk, from plant to plant, to all the plants in the garden, gathering a pinch of golden pollen from one, from another a bit of leaf or a small seed; but from each, something. Mostly seeds he gathered, and when his hands were full, he walked to a table and leaned there, pulling air into his lungs.

The flowers had quieted and the garden was still, almost, it seemed, expectant, waiting.

Johnmartin stood looking about, drinking into his mind the many growing reasons he'd been unable to ex-

press. Then he pushed the small scraps into a mound and put them into his mouth and swallowed them. And soon they were all gone.

The robots came into the garden.

"Goodbye," Johnmartin said, but he smiled.

"**I** AM DELIGHTED," the Supervisor was saying, "delighted." He was dressed entirely in black. From time to time he removed tears from his eyes with a handkerchief, which was also black. "Yes, yes, yes. It would have been so distasteful otherwise—we'd have had to cut out your tongue and all sorts of ugly things like that, together with appropriate excuses. I should never have forgotten it. As it is, why, the whole thing has gone beautifully. Most successful, orderly Death in my experience, I'd say! Tell me, what changed your mind?"

Johnmartin looked away. The crowd was deafening and the big three-dimensional screen hurt his eyes. "I couldn't shirk my duty to humanity."

"Well spoken!" The Supervisor beamed. "Ah—it couldn't have been the dancing girls and the parties, eh?" He digged slyly at Johnmartin's ribs.

A siren suddenly began to whine and the crowd fell silent: there was only the sound of the cameras, and of shuffling feet.

The Supervisor's voice boomed into a microphone. "Dear Friends, we are gathered here today in great sadness. Oh, dark the skies with mourning and bleak the..."

The voice droned on and on and soon sobbing was heard; then uncontrolled lachrymose cries, blowings of noses and grief-stricken coughs. A hidden organ played a melody in the minor key, and robots rolled noiselessly down aisles, distributing tissues.

In the elevated, transparent coffin, Johnmartin fidgeted and wished it were all over. He could not feel tired, for they had done strange restorative things to his body: he could only feel impatient, and a little ashamed.

"...in a better world, where we shall all, one day, come face-to-face with..." The voice went on.

And then, after endless minutes, abruptly the Services concluded. A solemn procession of men moved up to the platform, filing slowly past the coffin; occasionally someone would run fingers across Johnmartin's face: the Taram priest from Venus left an oily glob on his forehead. Johnmartin tossed restlessly.

The Supervisor approached, hands folded tightly together. His countenance reflected humility in the face of the unknown, un subdued though tempered by stoic, resolute recognition of his unhappy duty. He asked, sonorously: "In conclusion, if there is anything, any small service we can perform, you have but to ask."

"There *is* something."

"Only name it!"

"I would be very grateful if... afterwards... you would take the—remains—to my garden."

The Supervisor frowned, then shrugged. "It is done."

"And one other thing. Could you manage to keep my plants, all of them, in perpetual care? Water them and feed them, but otherwise leave them in peace? Could you do that for me?"

The Supervisor turned to the multitude and spoke into the microphone. "By all let this be heard! That Johnmartin, XIX, deceased, shall be taken to his... garden... subsequent to the dismembering; and that the garden shall forever from this day be kept as he himself kept it!"

A great cheer.

Johnmartin relaxed. "Thank you..."

"Very well!" The Supervisor took Johnmartin's hand and shook it vigorously. "And now, farewell!"

A BEAUTIFUL woman came onto the platform with a silver tray, upon which rested a single flask of finest translucent alloy. Within, the

liquid was amber and shone in the artificial suns.

The crowd was now mute and immobile. The organ music had stopped.

The woman moved toward the casket respectfully; once she smiled, and then handed the flask to Johnmartin. "Farewell! Farewell!"

Holding the sweet liquid in his mouth, he looked over the eager, silent people, the tired, bored, satiated people, whose eyes glistened with curiosity and envy and anticipation.

He swallowed.

His brain began quickly to swirl, but pleasantly, and the scene before him dissolved into a colored wash. Inchoate, unwilling images took vague form and he yielded to their development.

Until there was only the kaleidoscopic progression, of the images.

Sad faces he saw, and heard sighs of monotony in a gleaming cold world. Rusted metal-men and tarnished grey machines, standing skeletally on open empty plains...

Beautiful people, all yawning, plummeting through a Space of stars and blackness...

And, sharper, clearer than the rest, the final image. Johnmartin clung to it, smiling, a long time before the final darkness came.

It was a garden he saw, his garden, alive with plants from every corner of the Earth and from every planet in the world. It was warm and familiar. But there was something which was not familiar.

In the garden, where the sun could get to it, standing young and small among the others, was a flower. And though still moist with the earth from which it had sprung, the flower stood proudly and stretched out peculiar little buds and tendrils and drank the sunlight. And there was something in it of every other blossom.

Johnmartin welcomed the darkness.





INSIDE SCIENCE FICTION

A Department For The Science Fictionist

by Robert A. Madle

SCIENCE FICTION SPOTLIGHT

NEW^S AND VIEWS: The fan who was responsible for the attendance of Japanese fan, Tetsu Yano, at the 11th World S-F Convention added appreciably to his perpetual international-goodwill drive by taking London's H. J. Campbell on a tour of the USA. Campbell, who is editor of *Authentic Science Fiction*, accompanied Mr. and Mrs. Forrest J. Ackerman and Tetsu Yano on their return-trip from Philadelphia's big convention. This international fantasy quartette visited such s-f personalities as David H. Keller, Leslie F. Stone, Amelia Reynolds Long, and Robert Donald Locke before arriving in Los Angeles.

Campbell, although only able to stay in Los Angeles several days, managed to see "Cinerama", the Planetarium, and a preview of "Donovan's Brain." He also attended a meeting of the Los Angeles Science Fantasy Society, met most of the local s-f authors, and was the subject of a newspaper interview. Campbell, incidentally, at the 11th World Science Fiction Convention, presented a nice speech on behalf of London's desire for a World Convention. Although London failed to get the nod for 1954, we feel that such a convention is not too far off.

In a hotly-contested campaign, Jack McKnight edged Harold Lynch in a special Philadelphia Science Fiction Society election. McKnight was elected to fill out the term of Bob Madle, who resigned when he moved to Charlotte, North Carolina. ... Active fan Marion Zimmer Bradley (whose first two stories appeared in #2 *Vortex*) has sold an 18,000 word novelette to *Fantasy and Science Fiction*. And old-time fan Harry Warner Jr., who edited the excellent

fanzine of the early '40's, *Spaceways*, and whose first three stories appeared in 1953 issues of *Future Science Fiction*, will next appear in prozine *Spaceway*.

Woman's Day (August, 1953) featured an article by Jack Cluett titled, "Will Your Child Visit the Moon?" It was primarily a capsule history of science fiction. ... Frank Colby's column in a recent issue of the *Charlotte Observer* was based on Philip K. Dick's whimsical short-short, "The Eyes Have It," which was published in #1 *Science Fiction Stories*. ... Some editors are not too enterprising when it comes to creating pseudonyms. The July '53 *Planet Stories* features "Dickson Gordon", and #1 *Vortex* contains a short by "Deifla Lep-poc." On second thought, Editor Whitehorn displayed a little imagination: he could have used "Coppel Alfred."

Among the new s-f stars of 1952-53 were Richard Matheson, Philip K. Dick, Robert Sheekley, and Alan E. Nourse. Prediction: Michael Shaara will be one of the stars of 1954. His 11/53 *Galaxy* novelette, "The Book," is a gem. ... Thelma Hamm's "Weapon" will be reprinted in a forthcoming *Writer's Digest* as an example of a model short story. Some might be interested to know that the September, '53 issue of *Writer's Digest* was a special science fiction issue with articles by Sam Mines and L. Sprague de Camp, plus a listing of thirty markets. Editors were asked to list recently-appearing stories which they considered particularly representative of what they liked to see. Charles Dye was the only author to have stories mentioned in more than one editor's listing. Jack O'Sullivan of *Planet Stories* led off his list with Charley's "Man Who Staked the Stars", and Bob Lowndes included "The Aero-

pause" in a longer list. ...Charles Beaumont's short story, "The Crooked Man", which was too hot to handle by the science fiction magazines, will be printed in the March 1954 *Esquire*. ...It is reported that five anthropologists are after "World Well Lost", Theodore Sturgeon's novelet that appeared in #1 *Universe*.

Science fiction magazines, at one time a USA monopoly, are now being published in such countries as England, Australia, and Holland. The next one will emanate from Sweden with the title, *Astonishing Stories*. Forrest J. Ackerman, who is assisting the editor with the initial issues, informs us that "Slan" has been selected as the publication's first serial. ...A recent *Philadelphia Inquirer* editorial points out that, at the present time, it would cost \$300 per hour to hire an electronic brain, but that man "better keep on his toes if he hopes to stay ahead in the struggle of man vs. machine."

The Scientifilms: The big news this time is that Ray Bradbury's "The Martian Chronicles" will be seen on the screen in the near future. Bradbury, under contract to John Huston, is now adapting the "Chronicles" for filming. ...We wonder if the sudden lack of interest in 3-D films will alter the plans of Warner Brothers who are about to release "The Phantom Ape" replete with viewers. This is a technicolor adaptation of Poe's "Murders in the Rue Morgue". ...Another projected 3-D fantasy is Universal's "Black Lagoon", which tells of a scientific expedition to the Amazon region which uncovers a new species of human life. Frank Lovejoy will star. ...It is possible that Buck Rogers will be seen via the television. Mel Hunter has been approached as possible Technical Director. ...David H. Keller's "The Psychophonic Nuræ" (originally published in the November, 1928 *Amazing Stories*) has been purchased for TV filming. Also to appear on TV is "The Strip Teaser and the Space Warp," scripted by Joe Slotkin.

From the World of Books: L. Sprague de Camp, whose "Science Fiction Handbook" is enthusiastically recommended, is now at work on a voluminous "History of Science in America". ..."The Immortal Storm," by Sam Moskowitz, which is a 150,000 word history of science fiction fandom, is now available from the Atlanta Science Fiction Organization Press, 713 Coventry Road, Decatur, Georgia. It contains numerous photos, and Frank R. Paul has done the dust-wrapper. Price is \$5. ...Ballantine will publish Curt Siodmak's "Riders to the Stars." This is a reversal of the usual procedure, inasmuch as Siodmak first wrote this one for the films.

A very remunerative field for s-f writers today is juvenile writing, and, it appears, everybody wants to be remunerated. Among those now in the process of writing juveniles are Gordon Dewey, Robert Don-

ald Locke, Charles Beaumont, and H. J. Campbell. Incidentally, many of these so-called "juveniles" are fine adult entertainment.

35c bargain-buys have been published with extreme rapidity lately Ballantine Books, which organization has assumed leadership in the field of s-f pocketbooks, has published an original novel by Arthur C. Clarke, "Childhood's End;" Ray Bradbury's "Fahrenheit 451" (an expanded version of "The Fireman"); and "More than Human," by Ted Sturgeon, an expansion of his "Baby is Three." Ace Double Novels (edited by Donald A. Wollheim) have published a two-in-one volume by A. E. Van Vogt ("Universe Maker", a revised and enlarged version of "The Shadow Men", and "The World of Null-A"). Signet has just released Heinlein's anthology, "Tomorrow, the Stars," a fine collection. And for only a quarter you can pick up a copy of C. M. Kornbluth's "Takeoff," published by Pennant Books.

The best buy of the month, however, is the Maco Book, "The Complete Book of Outer Space." This slick book contains reprint material by Willy Ley, Werner Von Braun, Heinz Haber, Hugo Gernsback, and Donald H. Menzel. It is replete with illustrations by Paul, Emsh, Schomburg, and others—well worth the 75c asked. (A \$2.00 edition has been released by Gnome Press.)

THE FAN PRESS

EVERY NOW and then something of extreme importance and interest emanates from the fan world. Donald Day's "Index to the Science Fiction Magazines" and Sam Moskowitz's "The Immortal Storm" are good examples. The latest in this category is "Space Travel—When and How?", a booklet containing the opinions of "65 leading men of science and science fiction on space-flight's possible future."

The opinions of this group, which includes such men as scientists Von Braun, Whipple, Haber, Ley, Levitt, Richardson, and sciencefictionists Campbell, Gold, Boucher, Lowndes, Bradbury, and Mines, are varied indeed. Some of these experts are quite optimistic and predict *unmanned* space flight within the next year or two. (Farnsworth, Sturgeon, Farley, Lowndes, Brackett, and Van Vogt.) Others are more pessimistic and say that unmanned space flight will not occur until the brink of 2000, or thereabouts. (Gibson, Searles, Africano.) One cynic said, "Never!" Dr. Keller! How could you?

In most cases, the board of experts have manned space ships following unmanned flights by just a few years. This intriguing pamphlet is published by Gerry de la Ree, 277 Howland Avenue, River Edge, New Jersey. Gerry informs us that he still has a few copies left at \$1 each.

A recent arrival at our mailbox for the

first time is *Psychotic* (10c a copy from Richard E. Geis, 2631 N. Mississippi, Portland 12, Oregon). This one contains forty large, well-dittoed pages and a good assortment of material. We enjoyed "The Forgotten Man of Fantasy," a hoaxy sort of an article, by Francis Bordna, and the news and gossip columns by Shelby Vick, Bob Stewart, and Larry Balint. There are also several pieces of fan fiction.

A strange little publication is *Xenena* (15c from Wm. D. Knapheide, 992 Oak Street, #C, San Francisco 17, California). Mimeographed, one-quarter the size of a sheet of typing paper, *Xenena* is strictly bibliographical. Editor Knapheide delves into the past and lists references to ancient fanzines and organizations. Also included are short bibliographical articles. This one is recommended only to people attempting to obtain information apropos fandom's past, and to collectors of fan publications.

A "semi-pro" in every sense of the word is *Fantastic Worlds* (30c a copy from Sam Sackett, 1449 Brockton Avenue, Los Angeles 25, California). Editor Sackett, a college English teacher, manages to combine excellent off-trail fiction with well-written s-f articles. The current issue features David H. Keller's "The Question," a typical Kelleryarn, never before published in America. "The Mad Man from Machinery Row," by David R. Bunch, is a pathetic story of a man who wishes to destroy technological civilization—with an axe! There is another fine short story by William L. Bade, and articles by Mr. Science Fiction and Alice Bullock. As usual, this one is enthusiastically recommended.

How would you like to buy a 60-page fanzine for a nickel? Well, the current anniversary issue of *Mote* has just that many pages and costs but 5c! (Robert Peatrowsky, Box 634, Norfolk, Nebraska, is editor.) *Mote* is attractively dittoed in several colors and would be a good buy at twice the price. Vernon L. McCain writes an excellent article about the "Multi-Pros," that group of scientifiionists who are editors, authors, writers, and artists—all rolled up in one. Rich Lupoff, Rich Bergeron, and Dick Clarkson are represented with interesting and informative chatter columns, and there are other worth-reading items.

STF Trends (25c from Lynn Hickman, P.O. Box 184, Napoleon, Ohio) boasts of a cover by Jack Coggins and a reprint of an article from *Nation's Business*, "Out of this World," by Stanley Frank. The article, written for mass-consumption, deals primarily with the predictions of s-f, and quotes John W. Campbell profusely. Rich Elsberry has his usual interesting column, "The Voice of Fandom." This time Elsberry raises the roof about an alleged "pro underground" which nefariously plans to move conventions wherever it wishes. We have said it before, and we'll say it again:

this so-called differentiation between those who have sold to professional magazines and those who haven't no longer exists. Many of the old-time fan are now editors and writers, and many of the new fan are now selling to the prozines. And there is no such thing as a "pro underground."

TWENTY YEARS AGO IN SCIENCE FICTION

WE HAVE indicated now, after a disastrous 1933, the early issues of 1934 displayed that science fiction was rapidly climbing out of the depths to which it had plunged. F. Orlin Tremaine's "thought-variant" policy in *Astounding* and Charles D. Hornig's "New Plot" requisite for *Wonder* were getting results. Unfortunately, *Amazing* came up with nothing new or startling, and continued to plod along in its usual conservative manner.

The March, 1934 *Astounding Stories* "astounded" everyone by increasing from 144 to 160 pulp-size pages. Along with the increase, came Tremaine's monthly pep-talk in which he pointed out the many improvements in his magazine and closed with a plea for each reader to obtain another one. Howard V. Brown painted the cover, inspired by a scene from John Russell Fearn's "thought-variant" novelet, "The Man Who Stopped the Dust." Fearn told of an invention which was meant to eliminate fog and dust, but which also eliminated the blue of the sky itself. However, man wins out in the end. As a matter of fact, the following quote displays that man did win: "Yes—we win!" Sam said again, in a voice of triumph." Unfortunately, poor Sam was killed in the very last paragraph of the story when his machine was blown to fragments. This didn't appeal to us as much of a "thought-variant", or a story.

Jack Williamson appeared with another "thought-variant" novelet,—"Born of the Sun," which depicted the nine planets as eggs of the mother-star—and what happened when they hatched! Williamson's explanation follows:

"The planets were the seed of the sun. Strange life developed in them, through the ages, under solar radiation. The sun will die, now; its work is done. And the new creatures have gone forth, to feed themselves upon the star dust, to absorb diffuse radiation and the cosmic rays, to consume, perhaps, fragments of old suns, until they themselves are suns, spawning planets, and the cycle of their life is complete."

Fortunately, for mankind, a ship is constructed, and—"We've won," he whispered again to himself."

A fascinating short story was "The Time Imposter," by Nat Schachner. This de-

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The great Sitting Bull had said, "The day will come when the white man will do to himself what he has done to the Indians." And now, the Sioux found that doom had come indeed; all around the white man's civilization tottered, and his people died — while the Sioux survived. A new day dawned for Johnny Running Elk and his people, a day greeted joyously by the aged Many Coups and other oldtime warriors who remembered the past. But what if all the white men had not died?

THE DAY DOOM CAME

by Frederick J. Gosche

(illustrated by Ed Emsch)

GRAY-HAIRED Chief Big Thunder called for his best scouts. "Take the jeep," he said in English. "Radio us any news you think important. Maybe you will find someone still alive."

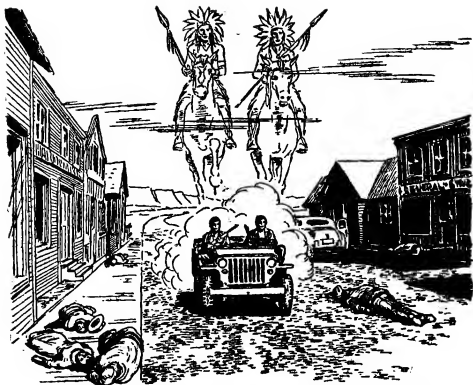
The two scouts, Johnny Running Elk and Bill Spotted Horse, did not look impressive in their levis, blue shirts, and thick-soled work shoes. Each had only a repeating rifle and 100 rounds of ammunition—good for skirmishes with small patrols, perhaps, but hardly effective against atom-bombs, airplanes, and long-range artillery. Nevertheless, Chief Big Thunder remembered that these two men were ex-G.I.'s from Korea, well-versed in scouting and guerrilla-fighting. Further, there was the native skill of Johnny, who could track a rabbit over miles of concrete pavement, if need be.

The chief looked long at Johnny, who was grim-faced, aware of the seriousness of this mission. As usual, Bill let Johnny do the talking; this was the way they had operated in Korea some years ago, as privates in the U.N. infantry.

"How long shall we stay out?" Johnny asked, and added a moment later in Lakotan, "Itan-chan. Chief."

The chief also lapsed into the Lakota tongue—the language of the Sioux. "Make this first scouting trip short. Be back by sunset. Like a stone dropped in a pool, creating ever-widening waves, we will scout out the country daily in increasing circles." The chief's long lean hands moved gracefully as he illustrated his words by sign language.

The scouts nodded. They and the younger Indians had been impatient to get news of the outside world, but the older men—the chief and his council—had debated for some time before they agreed to send a scouting expedition to the outside. For one thing, the silence since that H-bomb attack on the east coast had been ominous; the radios and TV sets had gone silent, blank. Since the outbreak of World War III, two months ago, all the white men on the reservation—the traders, the gas-station attendants, the cowboys, the ranchers—all had died, very quietly and without pain. As the days went by, the suspense



Despite the modern clothes, weapons, and the jeep, this pair were Sioux scouts, as in the old days...

had been like a hot, heavy wind on these late summer afternoons. Even Mike Crane's Wing, the tribe's ham operator, had been unable to raise any response on his short-wave set.

So the younger Sioux—those closest to the white man's ways—had become anxious. Had the United States been wiped out? Or had the radio and TV antennas, only, been knocked out? What was going on, out there—in the cities of the white men?

But the older Indians—those old enough to remember the history of the Oglala Sioux—seemed unsurprised at hearing news of the great holocaust. World War III—atomic-bombs, H-bombs—did not surprise the oldtimers, those who still remembered the days when the tribes were buffalo-hunters, roaming freely over the vast West.

These oldtimers were not many, any

more. There was Many Coups, for example. Many Coups was the oldest Indian of the Oglalas; he had fought against Custer in 1876, and he had been the friend of Sitting Bull, Crazy Horse, Gall, and Red Cloud. Often, in the winter evenings, Many Coups had told his tales to those who would listen: of the prophecies of Sitting Bull, the chief who saw visions. Sitting Bull had said: "The day will come when the white man will do to himself what he has done to the Indian. It may take many winters for the Great Spirit to become angry with the white man's greed. But some day, the doom will come."

Thus, Many Coups was not surprised. He went around among the meager shacks and shanties of the Sioux, reminding them of those bitter days of 1876 to 1890. He repeated for

the hundredth time how the Indians had surrendered after much fighting and starving, and how they had starved some more at the agencies and died of smallpox and tuberculosis. And finally had come that last bitter hour in 1890 on a snow-covered day in late December, when 200 men, women, and children had been mowed down by U.S. soldiers using Gatling guns. That had been at Wounded Knee, only a few miles from here, and Chief Big Foot and his slaughtered band were sleeping the long sleep in the graveyard on the hill.

WHEN THE first hydrogen bomb attacks were going on to the east, Many Coups had followed the news keenly, despite the 120 winters that had bowed him like a willow twig, and brought him at last to a wheelchair. And as the radio kept bringing news of the increasing ferocity and desperation of this global war, Many Coups had nodded vigorously and said: "The doom of the white man has been a long time coming. It has taken atom-bombs and hydrogen-bombs. But now it has come. Soon the buffalo will return, and the Indian will once again, as in ancient times, be the master of the continent."

Johnny Running Elk stood in silence, waiting for his chief to speak. For Johnny well knew that the chief was thinking of these words of Many Coups, and that the chief was deliberating in the slow, cautious way that chiefs should have when they thought of their people. Now Johnny cleared his throat, bringing Chief Big Thunder back from the old time to this hour of the present.

"When we use the radio," Johnny asked the chief, "we will speak Lakotan, will we not?"

"Yes." Big Thunder smiled, and it was like light moving over his grave face. "I remember what you and Bill told us about Korea—how the Communists were bewildered at hearing the

Sioux talking. Lakotan is as good as a code."

With a wave of his hand, he told the scouts that the interview was over. The two men got into the jeep. From the shacks and cabins of the settlement, the Sioux people had come, gathering along the old dirt road to watch the scouts depart. Johnny shifted gears, but at the edge of the settlement, he turned the jeep and circled the settlement. Answering nothing to Bill's inquiry, Johnny circled the cabins four times. Each time the headmen and the chief nodded, and Many Coups nodded more vigorously than all.

When the jeep was speeding over the rolling prairie country, Bill asked again. "Why did you do that?"

Johnny waited until the roar of the jeep had settled into a steady purr. "Bill, you should read up some about our people. In the old days, when scouts went out to see the buffalo-herds, they would ride their ponies four times around the tepees before they set out. Four is the sacred number of the Sioux, you know."

"So that's why the chief nodded approval." Bill studied this for a while, then continued. "Johnny, I can't understand you any more. We were boys together, we were buddies in Korea together. I thought I understood you, but I guess I don't."

"Big Thunder and Many Coups do," said Johnny. He said nothing more but concentrated on his driving, like a warrior urging his mustang with sure control. They had recorded the speedometer reading, and when their gasoline was half-consumed, they would turn back. A five-gallon can was in the back seat, for emergencies.

THEY DROVE west on the dirt road, Johnny expertly avoiding ditches and holes. They passed weatherbeaten road-signs, crossed the White River near the boundary of the reservation, and headed southwest for Nebraska. Continually, Bill kept using

the field-glasses. Often as they topped a rise, Johnny stopped the jeep, allowing Bill to examine the landscape from this vantage-point.

When Bill said he saw nothing, Johnny drove on. As he manipulated the steering-wheel, a part of his mind was elsewhere. He was thinking that, to a casual observer, this picture of two denimed figures in a jeep had no similarity to the scenes of old days—when war-bonneted, naked-chested warriors rode on pintos, with tall lances fluttering the pennons of eagle-feathers and red-dyed flannel. Yet to Johnny, the picture was the same—changed only in minor details. The Sioux had long-since developed, according to the white man's technology. Instead of ponies, they used cars; instead of smoke-signals or hand-mirrors flashed from hill-tops, they used radios, telephones, and TV. Where once the warriors had stopped to examine hoof-prints on the trail, now Bill examined a whole sweep of land through binoculars. Nevertheless, the principle remained the same. They were two Indians seeking signs of warfare, just as warriors had once scouted out Custer's cavalry.

Suddenly Johnny tensed. He did not know why, but he stopped the jeep.

"What's wrong?" Bill asked.

Johnny raised a hand. "I don't know. But I feel—"

It was strange. Years of civilization had not taken from some Indians that sixth sense which old buffalo-hunters of years ago had possessed. Even when the terrain was void of movement, old-time Indians used to be able to feel the presence of an enemy. It was an instinct born of years of close kinship with nature, in those frontier days when the very air seemed able to talk to an Indian. For some unknowable reason, this instinct was yet alive in some of the younger Sioux, like Johnny Running Elk.

Johnny took the binoculars and looked through them. For a long moment, he studied the horizon ahead, and

then nodded grimly as he handed back the glasses to Bill.

"Dead bodies ahead," he announced tersely. While Bill looked through the glasses, Johnny took out a Geiger counter from the back seat, glad now that Big Thunder had seen so many months in advance. But then, anyone should have known; the newspapers had been filled with the rumblings of the approaching global storm. And yet nobody had prepared. Sighing a little, momentarily saddened, Johnny manipulated the scale and adjusted the ear-piece. As the needle moved, he could hear the clicks that announced the presence of a radiation field.

"We'd better turn back," said Bill weakly.

"No." Johnny handed the Geiger counter to his friend. "The field isn't high. A few roentgens won't hurt us. But keep the probe outside the jeep. We want a true reading, not one cut down by the car body."

They went on, past large towns in a prairie country, seeing more dead but seeing nothing alive, not even a dog. When they reached a point where the counter indicator began to move sharply to the right, Johnny turned around.

"We're going back," he said. "Field's pretty high now."

In a moment, the jeep was speeding back along the road down which they had come. When they reached the town where they had first detected the radiation-field, Johnny swung northward. After a half-hour, the counter registered nothing except the background of cosmic rays, and Bill breathed more easily. "I'll be glad to get back to my wife and kids," he remarked.

"Hell, Bill. We had worse patrols than this along the 38th parallel. Remember?"

"Yeah, but that was when we were eighteen and unmarried. We're both family men now, with kids almost ready for high-school." He added, "Guess there'll be no high-school now. The kids'll be tickled to hear that."

2



ES, high-school, Johnny thought, remembering his years after his return from Korea. He had gone to college on the G. I. bill, had studied law. He intended to return to the reservation and help his people fight the in-

terminable lawsuits over legal possession of land, of water and oil rights, fight over the provisions of old treaties. But in practicing this kind of law, Johnny had suddenly become very weary—wary of the evils which a re-perusal of old treaties had brought back to him. Suddenly he had been able to understand the bitterness of the older Indians, the white-haired ones like Many Coups—men who had fought, starved, and been subdued outwardly, but whose hearts had never become the hearts of white men.

Then it was that Johnny had realized why these oldtimers had tried to keep alive the old way of life—the songs and dances; the legends, the traditions; the feeling of kinship with nature that civilization was killing out. Then it was that Johnny, though a college graduate, had re-asserted within himself the heritage of the Indian, knowing that the old way was best. This new way, the white man's way of civilization and progress had been leading only to doom and chaos. Thus it had been, and Johnny was now forced to admit that the old Indians had been right, all along. For they had known, even in their defeat, that the white man's way—the way of science and technology; man ruling nature; killing off the animals, exploiting the land of its timber, oil, and coal—had been a one-way street that had led to self-destruction.

Johnny remembered the words repeated by Many Coups—words which had been used before him by Sitting Bull and Crazy Horse. These words were: "The white man is a destroyer. Yes, it has pleased the Great Spirit to give the white man knowledge of machines and weapons, so that, like a sweeping prairie fire, the white man's legions have devoured the earth—Indian, bird, beast, plant, and mineral. But a day of reckoning will come, when the white destroyer will have to answer to the Great Spirit for this wanton disregard of the soul of nature."

Arousing, Johnny stopped the jeep and, with a gesture, motioned to Bill to operate the radio. Smiling ironically, Bill regarded his friend with some amusement. For some time past, Bill had noticed that Johnny was talking less, using gesture and glance more. It was as if Johnny had suddenly become the archetypal Indian—using his senses, saying little, but expressing himself eloquently to those schooled in silent ways of speech.

After Bill had the radio going, Chief Big Thunder's voice came through, from the reservation transmitter. Johnny spoke likewise in the Lakota tongue.

"The enemy has not been seen," said Johnny. "But the path he has followed is known to us. It is a path of destruction, worse than a prairie fire or a stampede."

"Ho hetchetu," said the chief. "It is well. Return now, for you have done enough this day."

"There is more, Itan-chan," said Johnny. "Allow us to scout farther north."

"You think you will find"—

"Something important. Yes, I have a feeling."

"Very well," said Big Thunder. "Proceed farther. But remember, your wives and children may be getting worried."

"I hear you, Chief. We'll be back before nightfall."

THEY TURNED off the radio and drove on, without encountering anything except the silent prairie. At times they passed stands of cottonwoods along streams now nearly dried out by the late summer sun. At times brown and red bluffs jutted up from the rolling land. Johnny felt as if he were in a boat on the sea—the jeep his boat, the sea this brown land, its grass burned ochre by a long spell of drought. Yet it was beautiful—this land. He dreamed.

He dreamed the dream of Big Thunder and Many Coups—the dream of all the oldtime Indians who, through these sunset years of their lives, found their thoughts turning to the past, to history. As a boy, Johnny had heard the tales of the old Indians and had never ceased being interested. On winter evenings in the cabin of his father and mother, Johnny had sat quietly, in Indian-boy fashion, hearing but not being heard. He had listened to mighty tales. Of buffalo-hunts in Montana and Wyoming. Of the summer gatherings for the annual Sun Dance, when all the clans and tribes had come from afar—to renew old ties and friendships, and thank the Great Spirit for the blessing of the buffalo and the freedom of the plains and mountains.

There had been horse-races, wrestling-contests, games. The young men had courted the girls of other clans and tribes, and there had been feasting on good buffalo-meat stewed in cowslip greens. Then the great religious ceremony had begun—the dance to the Sun, symbol of the Great Mystery, Wakan-tanka. And for that space of time, all the tribes had been welded into a nation by intangible bonds, deep-rooted like a tree.

But there had been other tales—less happy, but heroic even so. Tales of mighty chiefs—of Sitting Bull, Red Cloud, and Crazy Horse of legendary fame. How many times, on hearing these tales of his boyhood, Johnny had thrilled to the ringing cry of Crazy

Horse riding to battle: "Cowards to the rear; brave men follow me!"

There had been tales of victory—over Crook on the Rosebud River, over Custer and Reno at the Little Big Horn. But most thrilling of all to Johnny Running Elk were the tales of defeat—when Crazy Horse and his handful made their last stand, out of ammunition and swinging clubbed rifles as they fought against the well-armed and well-clothed troops of General Miles in zero weather. When Dull Knife's people, ambushed at dawn by troops, fought back like Titans, though naked and freezing in the snow. When Sitting Bull and Crazy Horse beat back General Crook at Slim Buttes, though outnumbered three to one. And last of all, the tale of surrender. Of the assassination of the chiefs. Of the humiliation and coercion of Red Cloud. Of the massacre of Big Foot and his followers.

These tales came now to Johnny's memory like a piercing cry down the wind, as he sat in a modern jeep and used a Geiger counter. And remembering this legendary struggle and defeat, Johnny found himself thinking as Many Coups and Big Thunder thought: *I am glad this has happened. We Indians did not ravage a fair land, nor violate nature. We lived as the birds live, respecting all creatures, glad to be alive, seeking no power, obsessed with no greed, and coveting no one else's life.*

NOW THEY drove past a slough, which had many iris leaves like green spears in the water. The bluffs of limestone gleamed whitely in the early autumn haze. The hills were burned to yellows and browns, darkening when cloud-shadows moved over them. Above the hum of the jeep, Johnny heard a sound and instantly stopped.

He and Bill listened. The sound was the *pec-weet* cry of the plover as the bird flew up from the prairie grass.

"The birds at least are alive," said Bill.

"Yes. All nature still lives—grass, bird, tree." Instantly Johnny cried out, unable to contain himself. "They live, we live! We are free!"

Johnny breathed deeply, almost overcome. After a while, he drove on, coming soon to a large town. Bill used the counter but it showed no radiation above background. Johnny braked to a stop, and they got out. They had seen bodies ahead, lying on the sidewalk where they had fallen. The two scouts picked up their rifles and approached cautiously, stepping quietly on the grassy lawns in front of the houses. They strained their ears, took quick glances around. They were keyed up, wary, suspicious of the great quietude that seemed like a smothering blanket in the afternoon sun.

"Easy, Bill. Remember those patrols in Korea."

"Yeah, yeah, I know," Bill grumbled. "I'm not a greenhorn at this business."

Looking inside the houses, they saw more bodies—some at tables, some in chairs, some on the floor. It was eerie—too eerie. The silence was too deep, broken only by the quiet footfalls of the two scouts.

"Gives me the creeps," said Bill. "I don't get it."

"Neither do I. Look."

They looked, and Bill went on: "All dead, yet no damage anywhere. No bomb has hit this town, yet everyone is dead. The houses are untouched. Seems like you could stand here and watch and imagine everyone is sleeping—like those siestas Mexicans have in the afternoon."

"Yes. The siesta of death. But wait!" Johnny raised a hand. "That's an idea, Bill; look again."

Bill looked at the bodies. "I see them. They're dead."

"But the postures, Bill. Look at that man in his chair—as if he had yawned tiredly, and instantly gone to sleep in

the middle of his yawn." Suddenly Johnny snapped his fingers. "That's it, Bill. Germ warfare!"

"Huh?"

"Remember those white people on our reservation? They died quietly."

"Yeah, sure. But then, how about us?" Bill frowned uneasily. "Maybe this disease is contagious. It's got to be, to wipe out everybody."

"Everybody but us," said Johnny. Then suddenly the wonder of it made him break out into loud laughter.

"But what—" said Bill, eying Johnny severely.

"The irony of it, Bill! The—the poetic justice—or whatever you want to call it. It's the revenge of history!" Johnny laughed again, unable to contain the hugeness of the thought.

"What's the joke, for cripes sake!"

"Germ warfare, Bill. Germ warfare—and the Sioux are immune!"

3



EACHING the reservation settlement, Johnny and Bill passed through crowds of Indians, who had gathered here to await the return of the scouts. To inquiries, Johnny replied, "You shall soon know all,"

and went to the chief's cabin, where Mike's radio had been installed, and where Many Coups and other headmen were gathered. The smell of pipe-smoke was sharp in the warm air.

Even Bill, usually so modern, stood silent at seeing this gathering. Johnny had told him of the oldtime tribal councils in the big council-lodge of buffalo-hide. Now such a tepee was no more, and in its place was this small cabin of unpainted planks. But the bundles of sagebrush were there, festooning the walls and lying about on the floor. The white buffalo-skull, also,

was there; it was the only skull on the reservation, and Many Coups had preserved it lovingly all these years. For it symbolized the old free way of life.

Bill opened his mouth to speak, but Johnny nudged him into silence. So they stood there, waiting for Chief Big Thunder to open the council.

From a rack of cedar-wood, the chief took the long-handled medicine-pipe and filled it with tobacco. He lighted it with a match and after it was going, he blew smoke upward, downward, and to the four winds, asking the blessing of Wakantanka, the God of All, who worked the laws of life through the elements, the sun, the moon, and stars. This was the traditional way, and it was impressive. Finally the chief gave the pipe to Johnny, and the scout repeated the ceremony, puffing the pipe and pointing its stem to the six points of the world—up, down, east, west, north, and south. Meanwhile, the older men—and Many Coups most of all—nodded vigorous approval of this modern Indian who knew the oldtime Sioux customs so well.

All listened as Johnny began the story of the scouting trip. He spoke in Lakotan, even though all present knew English. For as each day passed during this period it seemed that, more and more, the tribe was shifting over to the old ways, the old language, the old customs. Even this council—long abandoned by the Oglalas—proved that the return to the ways of their fathers and grandfathers had well begun. Indeed, among the crowd gathered here in front of and around the cabin, there were no longer just the denims and print-dresses of the agency Indians, but here and there blossomed the breech-cloths, the blankets, the feathers of the old time.

No one had told anyone else to change clothes. It was as if a sixth sense had swept the people. They were returning to the old way of life, now that the white man had destroyed him-

self; and all these events had been prophesied by Sitting Bull.

Johnny told the story of the scouting-trip in the traditional way—augmenting his speech with posturing and gesturing, and sign-language. He acted out the trip—the ride over rolling country; the search with binoculars; the sudden evidence of the path of death; the residual radiation; the germ-warfare. When he had finished his tale, a great hush lay over the people.

Finally an old man said: "It is true then. We Lakotas are the only people left alive in the whole world."

Then mingled emotions swept over the listeners. Some were sad, some happy. Women wept, and men looked at each other. Many Coups, incredibly wrinkled in his wheelchair, cried out with a quavering voice: "It is well. Once more, as of old, the Indian resumes his rightful place. We shall bring back the buffalo, the bear, the elk, the antelope. Again we shall be free to roam our beloved country—the Pa Sapa, our Black Hills stolen from us by the white man, our Big Horn Mountains where once we hunted the fleet-footed sheep. Once more we shall pitch our tepees in the places where our fathers camped—by the swift Powder River, in the valley of the Little Big Horn where Crazy Horse and Gall led us against Custer—by the Rosebud River where the smell of roses is always sweet in the summer air. Glad am I to have lived long enough to see this fulfillment of an age-old dream."

And the patriarch sank back in his wheelchair, tears on his withered cheeks. After a respectful silence, Chief Big Thunder went on with the council. He inquired of Johnny, "So all these whites were killed either by the deadly invisible light or by disease?"

"Yes, Itan-chan." But Johnny added, "Remember, we scouted out only a small area. What lies east or west, north or south, far from here, we do

not know. It is possible, maybe probable, that many regions escaped the attacks."

THERE WAS another silence. After a moment, the chief addressed the people.

"Hear me, ye Oglalas—friends, cousins. You have elected me chief. For a long time we had no chiefs, but were governed by the white agent. Now the ancient offices of chief and council have been revived. Once more we return to the traditional way of self-government—the people acting through their chief and their council."

Murmurs of approval arose. The chief respected these comments and waited. When all was quiet again, he resumed: "Hear me, my friends. Though we instinctively feel that this terrible war has resulted in the destruction of the white man, yet we must be wary. It may be that in remoter regions, white men still live. If so, they will come back, with machines and guns as of old. So long as a single white man lives, history will repeat itself. For you all know that the white man desires conquest, power, rulership over so-called savages and over bird, beast, and rock. Thus it was when the Spaniards came and slaughtered the unknowing Aztecs; when Columbus depopulated the natives of the West Indies; when the Puritans and Pilgrims conquered the Narragansetts and the Pequods. Then the Iroquois, the Wyandots, the Shawnees—all suffered the same fate, driven and hounded by the tide of white settlers, until all that was left was to make a last stand and then surrender. Now, the Great Spirit has seen fit to give the Indian another chance. We must not lose that chance."

Cries of approval rode the air. The young men scowled fiercely, and the older ones began singing war-songs. The chief raised a hand, and it was instantly quiet.

"There is much to be done," he pointed out. "Winter is coming. We

have food but we must conserve it. We are poor, but we have a few guns; we have automobiles. We have a box that detects the invisible light. We have men like Johnny Running Elk and Bill Spotted Horse, who have studied in the white man's schools and are wise in many things."

The people pondered these words and found them good. The council ended with the formation of a practical plan.

In the days that followed, Johnny and Bill scouted farther and farther out. They found no white men, but they were glad to report that the animals on the game preserves had survived. The scouts charted a route to the Black Hills by means of the Geiger counter.

At last, in October, the people were told it was safe to move. The supplies were packed on trucks and in cars. With Johnny and Bill leading the way, the caravan started out. They camped nightly in the open, using tents of canvas. They avoided the abandoned houses that ranged here and there along the highway, for they had been warned about the diseases and the radiation.

By the end of the month, the tribe had found a good camping-ground—a valley in the Black Hills, where there was good water, grass for the cattle and horses, and room enough for all. Meanwhile, Johnny and Bill continued their scouting trips tirelessly. On a day in early November, when small snowflakes began falling, Chief Big Thunder sat beside Mike Crane's Wing while the operator tried to contact the scouts. But there was no answer.

"Something has gone wrong," said the chief.

"Maybe their jeep radio has gone dead," Mike reassured him. "Those things happen."

MORE DAYS passed, with no answer from the scouts. Uneasiness

grew among the people. The first thin wisps of snow lay scattered upon the hillsides. It would be a long, severe winter, said the old men—those who could gauge the weather by smell and by observation. Small animals had put on heavy coats of fur; and every morning, ice formed on the tops of puddles and the ledges of sloughs. The people were forbidden to kill animals. Let the beasts multiply, advised the chief. It would take some years before the animals—and particularly the buffalo, a ragged herd now—could increase in sufficient numbers to be used as food. So the people lived as they used to live in times of famine—on roots they culled from the woods; on acorns which they leached and pounded into flour for bread; on the bulbs of water-lilies; on cat-tail seeds, wild turnips and onions. The cattle were saved for emergencies.

"It will take time," said the chief, as he stood one day in the middle of the tepee circle. He had wheeled Many Coups out into the early winter sunshine. The old man wanted to warm himself, he said, for his old bones could feel the chill of approaching death. His winters had piled many snows upon his head, but the old man had no fear; he had seen a miracle, and he was content.

"It is a good beginning," said Many Coups. "A few more winters, and the buffalo will cover the plains as of old. I remember the thousands that used to graze in this valley. I remember when the bellows of the bulls were like the roar of a great storm. Now the buffalo are few, but they are hardy; they will multiply."

Now Many Coups had another thought. "It is necessary to plan for the good of the people. Have you considered this, Chief?"

"I have," said Big Thunder. "I have already chosen a successor; for I am aging; and I shall never live as long as you, old oak tree."

"And your successor?"

"Johnny Running Elk."

The old warrior nodded. "It is well. It is *sha sha*, excellent. This young man has learned the lessons of the old ones. He knows all the lore of the Sioux. Further, he acts as a chief should act—not on impulse, but after much thinking. He will lead the people well."

"But," said the chief uneasily. "He has been gone many days. I wonder."

"There's your answer," replied Many Coups, as a sudden shout arose from boys playing at the edge of the camp. The boys came running, excitedly calling out that Johnny had returned. In a moment, the tepees had erupted their occupants into the clearing. The murmurs subsided as they saw the jeep returning, bouncing over the hillocks and entering the flat clearing. But when the people saw the contents of the jeep, the murmurs arose again.

Slowly, Johnny drove the jeep up and stopped it in front of the chief. As Johnny stepped out, the eyes of Many Coups were piercing and hard, staring at what the jeep held.

Two white men, bound hand and foot in the back seat! White men, eyes big with fear and uneasiness, but alive and unharmed.

4



ing.

Many Coups nodded. "This young

HE INDIANS crowded around, exclaiming, asking questions. But Johnny raised a hand and the excitement subsided. Against the impatience of the people to hear the news, Johnny was silent, grave, waiting.

man remembers the old ways better than we do," he told the people. "He is waiting for the pipe-ceremony—the traditional way of welcoming returning scouts."

"Ah," said Big Thunder, in his own subdued excitement admiring Johnny's composure and adherence to the old custom. Surely this young man was more Indian than any of them.

When the pipe-ceremony was finished, the chief said in Lakotan, "Speak, Johnny; our ears will listen."

So Johnny, using gestures and postures and speaking in the language of the Sioux, told what had happened. These white men were scouts—the vanguard of a large group of white survivors. At this announcement, the people murmured, some in anger, some in uneasiness.

As they encountered the white men, Bill had wanted to kill them immediately. They had spotted the white men in a car, before the white men had been aware of watching eyes. It was easy for the two Indians to blow out the front tire with a quick shot, and cover the whites with their rifles. The whites had been speechless with astonishment; Johnny took advantage of their surprise to have Bill tie them up quickly.

On the way back to camp, Johnny had interrogated the whites, who had eagerly told their story. They were two of about ten thousand white survivors. The men said they thought other such groups had survived in the Eastern States, and would sooner or later communicate with each other. The group to which the two whites belonged, however, had no radios and also had been forced to evacuate the radioactive zone. They had decided to move westward, fearing invasion of the eastern seaboard by the enemy. They had believed they would be safest on the prairies and in the mountains. Their big problem was providing food for the thousands of white survivors—

women, children, babies, as well as men. The food in the cities was too radioactive to be safe to eat, and the unbombed cities were full of disease.

The white people had been caught unprepared, flat-footed. City-dwellers, they had been unequipped even for the sudden change to winter weather. For the first few days, panic had had its will among them—panic and shock and grief at the fatalities. It had been a sneak-attack, and the whole civil-defense system had collapsed. Finally, more like a mob than like civilized people, the survivors had fled pell-mell westward, and it had been every man for himself.

For a fleeting moment, Johnny had felt a great pity. These whites were obviously unfitted for coping with the situation that now confronted them. Those who had succeeded in getting a little food had greedily devoured it. Looters abounded in that period of anarchy which followed the disaster. Finally, in a blind sort of way, the ten thousand had come together and had elected leaders and policemen. It was then they decided to come westward into the safety of the mountains. But even by that time, autumn was over, and an early, cold winter had set in. The two whites had been sent ahead as scouts and also to find food. Neither the two scouts nor the survivors had had anything to eat for several days. What the enemy attack had failed to do, starvation would soon accomplish. Therefore, the two whites had begged Johnny, help us; give us food so that we may survive.

"I wanted to shoot them at once," said Bill. "But Johnny—" He gestured accusingly at his friend. Angry murmurs arose from the Indians. Yes, Johnny should have allowed Bill to shoot them. The Indians' newly-found freedom would now be menaced by the encroachment of strangers.

Johnny faced the people. "I had my orders from the Chief. It was not my decision whether these men should live

or die; I was sent on a scouting-party, not on a war-party."

The headmen nodded approval at these words, silencing the angry resentment of the people.

"Ho," said Many Coups. "He is wise; a good warrior, who obeys the orders of his Chief."

THE TWO whites, unable to understand Lakotan, had yet gleaned something from the gestures, the menacing murmurs. Now they sat in the jeep, looking around fearfully and shivering, their lips twitching. They looked most at Johnny, not with fear but with pleading. They seemed to sense the pity that he felt. But Johnny averted his glance and stood calm and unruffled.

"Now," said Big Thunder. "Let us counsel together and decide what to do with these white men."

Bill Spotted Horse spoke first. He reminded the Sioux that these whites were ten thousand in number; that number included several thousand able-bodied men. The Indian tribe, on the other hand, numbered about three thousand—of whom only six hundred were warriors. In addition, as the two white scouts had said, there were no doubt other groups of survivors as large as theirs. Sooner or later, these isolated survivors would band together. The white government would reorganize and carry on. If they survived the next couple of months, the radiation-level would be decayed enough that the whites could enter the cities, find weapons, machines. Then once again, the whites would re-possess the continent. Said Bill, "Seeing our cattle, the whites will take them. Seeing our food, they will seize it. Seeing our wives and daughters, bachelors among the whites will take them."

"Is that really true?" asked one of the crowd, a young man who had recently married and was now holding his bride close.

"Look at history," Bill replied.

"When the settlers came to New England and New York, they were few and weak. The east-coast Indians helped them through the first bitter winters. But as soon as the whites were strong enough, they turned upon their Indian friends and slaughtered them. You also know the history of the Lakotas—how our wives were seduced; our daughters raped; our lands stolen; our chiefs imprisoned or assassinated. You know the history of Wounded Knee, the massacre of innocents by white soldiers."

There was great discussion now. Some said that those events were long past, that the whites and the Indians had lived in peace for many years. Had not Sioux youth even volunteered for service in the U.S. army? Look at Bill and Johnny, two veterans of the Korean campaign on behalf of the United Nations.

"True," said Bill. "But that was when we had no chance to go back to the old way of freedom. We had reconciled ourselves to becoming white men, living like white men. But deep down in every Indian's heart was always that dream—a continent populated by Indians, and only by Indians. We have that dream within reach now."

Most of the people sided with Bill now. Sentiment increased against the whites; some even advocated falling upon the survivors and annihilating them.

Now Big Thunder spoke up. "Bill speaks the truth. This is why we Oglalas have come to the Black Hills, why we refrain from killing animals. It is our chance to return to the true Indian mode of life. We do not violate nature the way the white man does; we do not destroy the forests nor annihilate the animals. We, the oldtime Indians, fought with other Indians, it is true—but only on a small scale. It remained for the white man to devise terrible ways of mass-murder. Before the whites came to this continent,

there was room enough for all tribes, from east to west, and the buffalo, the elk, the deer were plentiful. But in fifty years in the west, the white man destroyed all. Remember this well."

There was a deep silence, as the people remembered. Again, the gray-haired chief spoke, without passion, without emotion: "I have no hatred toward the white man. I speak only facts. History tells us what white men do, driven as they are by greed for gold and power. Allow any whites to survive, and once more, in a few years, greed and selfishness will rule the continent, and we Indians will be fenced in as before upon reservations barely able to support us."

"What are we waiting for, then?" cried Many Coups from his wheelchair. "There is only one decision possible. Kill these two white men, so that their fellows will never know what became of them. And in the future, whenever any whites approach, shoot them down at once. Only in this way can we be sure that our land, returned to us by a miracle, will always remain ours."

IT LOOKED as if the matter were settled, and the two whites seemed to know this, for they shivered more than ever. But then Johnny Running Elk stepped forward and addressed the people. They listened with respect, for all knew that he was next in line as chief. They knew Johnny as wise in many things—a quiet, deliberate man who had fought, suffered, and struggled for his people. He among them all was the truest Indian, they knew; beneath his veneer of civilization, the ancient heart of Sitting Bull and Crazy Horse beat in that breast.

Then Johnny said a strange thing. He said, "Free the white men. Feed them, and escort them back to their people, with all the food we can spare."

A hush as of waiting storm fell over the gathering. Even Big Thunder looked incredulously at Johnny.

"Are you completely mad?" cried Many Coups, half-rising in his chair. "What has happened to this resolution of the Sioux to return to freedom? Don't you know that so long as the whites survive, they will increase and eventually turn upon us? Shall we repeat our hardships, be subjugated, forced to obey the white man's laws? Shall we give up our customs, our lands, our self-government, and once more become a remnant of our former glory?"

But Johnny stood straight and firm, unruffled. "I have pondered this problem many times since the war began. And I say that the words of Bill, of Big Thunder, of Many Coups are all true. There is a good chance that we can win out over the white man, since he is now weak and disorganized. If we isolate ourselves from the rest of the world, and shoot any strangers that approach, we can hold out in these lands for generations to come. That is what Massasoit, Powhatan, and Montezuma should have done and did not do."

"Then you agree that we should kill these two whites?" asked the chief.

"No, I do not agree. You have said history repeats itself, and so it does. We cannot go against history. History shows that our Indian chiefs—Massasoit, Powhatan, Montezuma, Smoke—wanted to be friends with the white man."

"Only to be destroyed for their weakness," cried Many Coups vehemently. "We must not be weak; we must be ruthless—else we will be defeated again, in time."

"True," said Johnny with a strange and sad smile. "That is our destiny; the destiny of the American Indian."

The hush deepened over the people, as they heard these ominous words. At length the chief raised his gray head and looked Johnny in the eyes. "And if we befriend the white man, and he turns against us as he did in history—what then?"

"Why then," said Johnny, "there will be time enough to resist, to fight—as Sitting Bull, Red Cloud, and Crazy Horse fought."

"And they were defeated," said Many Coups angrily. "Fools that they were, to believe in the white man's goodness."

"Were they fools?" asked Johnny quietly. "I have always thought that they were great men."

"That is so," said Big Thunder. He turned to Many Coups. "Were they fools or great men?"

Many Coups muttered grudgingly that they were great men. "But," he added defiantly, "they began resisting and fighting too late. Too late to do any good, and in the end they died and their people became prisoners."

"Not inwardly," said Johnny. "Look at me, ye people. You see me stand here—the product of the white man. I have been to his schools; I have fought in his army against an enemy I had never met. I have obeyed his laws and his police. My father before me accepted the white man's yoke, adopted his manner of living, his clothes, house, language. We took up farming and ranching and other white-man occupations."

"But the simple fact is: the Indian has never been defeated. If I am an Indian, a true one, I have never admitted defeat—except in the outward form. But within my heart, I have remained unconquered yet—a true child of nature, with feeling for the Great Spirit, and for all living things."

HE SPREAD out his hands eloquently, using gestures to accentuate his world. "What, ye people," he said in the poetic speech of the Lakotas. "Do you think that fences make a prisoner so long as a true heart beats within? Can outward subjugation change one's nature? That is the lesson you must learn, friends, even as I and my father have learned it, as our

dead chiefs knew it. Victory consists in acknowledging the will of destiny. Victory is not in outward show of arms but in inward thought. The mind can never be conquered, nor can the heart."

He finished quietly. "Let the white men go free; let us help them and their people. Perhaps they will remember our kindness and respect us in later years, when they grow strong and confident again. But if they prove to be ungrateful, what does it matter? The Indian will survive anything that the white man can do. Have we not survived and retained our racial identity even to this day? Have we not preserved our traditions? And what do those traditions say? They say: *the Sioux fight only their equals or their superiors in arms*. Our traditions say: *help the weak, and fight the strong*. I have spoken."

In the hush that followed, Chief Big Thunder looked at Many Coups and the other headmen. Glances were exchanged though no word was spoken. Then the chief raised a hand and a great heaviness lay in his voice as he said: "It is well that you remind us, Johnny, of our past. What you say is so. Defeat is a thing of the mind and heart, never of weapons or circumstance." Then a strange and weary sadness filled the chief's voice as he added softly: "Let the white men live."

For a moment, Big Thunder stood pondering on the future, which already loomed dark and ominous in his inner vision. He saw already the inexorable march of the white man, regaining his continent and once again annihilating trees, animals, and the Indians; once again fighting with other white men in global wars and struggles for supremacy of sea and land. But now, the chief raised his head and gave orders in a firm voice.

The white men were untied and food was brought forward. An hour later,

Johnny led a caravan of automobiles and trucks laden with food out of the camp—toward the place where the starving whites were located.

"Our dream is over," said Many Coups, as he watched the caravan depart. "It was a brief dream." He sighed. "A good dream."

Chief Big Thunder turned to the ancient warrior with a smile. "You did not object when I gave orders to set the whites free."

"No, I did not object; it was the will of the people."

"Are you sorry, old fighter?"

"Nay," said Many Coups, straightening with pride in his wheelchair. "Only sorry I shall not live long enough to see what is going to happen."

"What, old war-horse! You wish to

look into the future? A future fraught with broken treaties, battles, hardships, subjugation of the Indians once again?"

"Why not? Didn't that chief-to-be say it would be so?"

"Except for the unconquered heart."

"Ah," said Many Coups. "Crazy Horse, as I recall, led the United States a merry chase. I'm thinking that Johnny Running Elk is of the old stock; he will give them a good fight!"

Many Coups fell silent, then aroused and added with a gleam in his black eyes. "Besides, if he is defeated—and I say *if*—it will still be a victory. Not for the Indian, perhaps. But for history!"



Readin' and Writhin'

(continued from page 28)

quirement of successful bad books—it makes you wonder what's going to happen next. It did leave me exhausted; I finished it in two sittings, and made two pages of irritated notes. It left me by no means despairing—even for the future of the American publishing industry; but it didn't, even for an instant, scare me.

It couldn't, because (except for a rare page or paragraph at a time) no single character comes to life. Burden himself is a nincompoop; Lark shows signs of Machiavellian intelligence when interrogating Burden, and immediately spoils it all by talking like a schoolboy to his superior; the minor characters, nearly all of them, are names without faces. Worse still—and this is the central fault of the book—the real enemy, the State, cannot be judged, cannot be compared, and cannot frighten because it does not exist: it has not only no name, but no history, no philosophy, no doctrine peculiar to itself, no symbols, no slogans, no catchphrases; it displaces no air and leaves no footprints.

A villain without a motive might as well wear handlebar mustaches and snarl, "Ah, me proud beauty," the audience would at least know that it was expected to hiss. For Ivanov in "Darkness at Noon", the end justifies the means: "*'Have you ever read brochures of an anti-vivisectionist society? They are shattering and heartbreaking; when one reads how some poor cur which has had its liver cut out, whines and licks his tormentor's hands, one is just as nau-*

seated as you were tonight. But if these people had their say, we would have no serums against cholera, typhoid, or diptheria....'" For O'Brien in "Nineteen Eighty-Four", the means justifies itself: "*'We know that no one ever seizes power with the intention of relinquishing it.... The object of persecution is persecution. The object of torture is torture. The object of power is power.'*"

For Karp's Lark—who exists, himself, only in flickers—there is neither means nor end: he tortures Burden because he has been put there by the author to do so.

These comparisons are harsh, but the author has invited them and must take them along with his royalties. Perhaps the most curious thing about this book is that Karp has nowhere seized the opportunity—which placing his story in the future gives him—of implementing his tyranny with new technology; whenever it has been possible to advance a step beyond Koestler, Karp has resolutely taken one back from Orwell. The system of human informers in "Darkness at Noon", for example, becomes a system of electronic informers in "Nineteen Eighty-Four": *For a moment he was tempted to take [the note] into one of the water closets and read it at once. But that would be shocking folly, as he well knew. There was no place where you could be more certain that the telescreens were watched continuously.*

Carried one step further still, this be-
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Inside Science Fiction

(continued from page 47)

scribed a criminal being rescued from the electric chair, at the last moment, by strange beings who materialized in the death-chamber. They turned out to be the descendants of the criminal, who came out of the future to make sure he didn't burn—because if he did, they would never be born. The hero chased the criminal into the future, fell in love with one of the criminal's descendants, brought back the criminal to pay his debt to society—and then realized the girl he loved would never exist. There were other short stories by Donald Wandrei, Stanton A. Coblentz, Henry J. Kostko, and Wallace West. Illustrations were by Brown, Murchioni, and Orban.

Frank R. Paul's cover painting for *Wonder Stories* for March portrayed a scene from "Children of the Ray," an "Earth-Guard" story, by J. Harvey Haggard. The mysterious red spot of Jupiter was the scene of this below-average short story. "Xandulu," a three-part serial by Jack Williamson, started this time. This was an A. Merritt type of story which developed about a lost city in Africa, and the kingdom of Xandulu which existed ten miles below the earth's surface. Miles Kendon's adventures in Xandulu with his allies, the Flame Folk, and their deadly enemy, the Red Race, made fascinating reading. This type of story apparently never becomes dated.

One of the oddest stories ever printed in an s-f magazine was "The Brain Eaters of Pluto," by Kenneth Sterling. This was strictly slapstick burlesque—by a thirteen-year-old author, no less! (No more?) Sterling's prozine success at such an early age still stands as a record. Another well-remembered story is David H. Keller's psychological "The Literary Corkscrew," which told of an author who could only write under the excruciating pain of having a corkscrew ground into his backbone. Keller certainly gave birth to off-trail ideas—and this was one of his best. Richard Vaughan brought "The Exile of the Skies" to a happy denouement, and there were other fair shorts by Laurence Manning and P. E. Cleator. Milton Rothman, Forrest J. Ackerman, P. Schuyler Miller, and Jack Darrow effused in "The Reader Speaks." Paul, Winter, and Bulow illustrated. This month *Wonder Stories* packed more punch into its 128 pages than did *Astounding* with its 160 page issue.

Leo Morey's cover for the March, 1934 *Amazing Stories* illustrated a scene from

Part 3 of E. E. Smith's ancestor of the "Lensman" stories, "Triplanetary." The adventures of Conway Costigan and Gray Roger elated science fiction readers of two decades ago. We suspect that thousands of contemporary readers are still fascinated by "Skylark" Smith's interstellar epics, thanks to the book versions which have been released in recent years by Fantasy Press. Part 2 of H. Haverstock Hill's "Terror Out of Space" appeared. As mentioned in the March *Future*, this was mediocre space-opera. H. Haverstock Hill, incidentally, was a pseudonym for English writer, J. M. Walsh.

Bob Olsen was represented with a long novelette of life in an ant colony, "Peril Among the Drivers." Olsen was quite an expert on ants, and this story of human egos being transplanted into the bodies of ants via the process of *metempsychosis* was not only interesting, but also instructive. Short stories by Henry J. Kostko and Victor Endersby, along with a reprint by Poe ("Ms. Found in a Bottle") rounded out a better-than-average (for *Amazing Stories*, that is) issue. Leo Morey (as usual) illustrated the entire magazine. Among the readers discoursing in "Discussions" were Frank K. Kelley, Festus Pragnell, Forrest J. Ackerman, and Edward F. Gervais, the latter of whom discussed the International Cosmos Science Club, one of the earliest fan groups.

In the fan world, *Fantasy Magazine*, "The Digest of Imaginative Literature," maintained monthly publication in the face of many obstacles. Both the February and March issues contained 36 printed pages, replete with information and news of the professional science fiction field. Columnists Mort Weisinger, Julius Schwartz, Ray Palmer, and Forry Ackerman were always present. There were interviews with Henry J. Kostko, P. Schuyler Miller, and Captain (now Colonel) S. P. Meek, along with chapters nine and ten of "Cosmos" (by Abner J. Gelula and Raymond A. Palmer, respectively). There were other stirrings in the fan-world, such as the appearance of the mimeographed *International Observer*, organ of the International Cosmos Science Club. Fandom was about to undergo a complete metamorphosis, and the most important factor which fostered this change will be discussed in the June *Future Science Fiction*.





"Rhonda disgraced all of us, when the Gods came for father."

Generally speaking, there are two ways of facing a horrible existence, where living of some kind is still possible. You can go down fighting against the system; or you can persuade yourself that it isn't really horrible after all . . .

THE ADAPTABLE ONES

by Morton Klass

(illustrated by Ed Emsch)

Novelet of Strange Rebirth

Day 114 Y.A.C. 382

THE GODS came for father today. I was so proud of him I had to laugh out loud. Father was by far the fattest man in the Dome, which was why the Gods' black bubble-ship picked him over all the others. Rhonda cried a whole lot when They took father; and when I told her to shut up and stop shaming me in front of everybody, she just howled and ran and hid behind the nearest food-trough. Yes, *ran!* Rhonda's a dope, even if she is only ten. Anyway, she's my wife, and I'm stuck with her, so I'll just have to teach her better manners. I promised father I'd be kind to her, when he married us.

Golly, I was proud of him today. To see him stumbling around on the grass, his big belly joggling, and all the fat

on his face and arms and legs rippling as he moved—well, it did something to me. Though I'm scrawny for an eleven-year-old—even Rhonda can put her arms all the way around my middle—I made up my mind I'm going to grow up to be as fat as father when I'm twenty-five, and the Gods come for me.

That's why I started this journal. I'm not going to waste myself walking around with the other kids, exploring the rim of the Dome. When I'm not eating or sleeping, or teaching Rhonda manners, or doing some other important things like that, I'll just sit in the light of the Bulb and write.

My father always did that, and look how fat he became! He taught me to read and write, and I guess I'm the last person in the Dome who knows how, now that he's gone.

A lot of folks think writing is im-

proper. Father's brother, Peter—he's twenty-two, and nowhere near as big as father—says if the Gods had meant men to write, They'd have given us material to write with—just as They've given us feeding-troughs and water-fountains all over the Dome. But if it was good enough for my father, it's good enough for me.

Besides, writing keeps a man busy, and his mind free from sinful thoughts—like wondering what is outside the Dome, or what the Gods really look like. It's hard for a boy not to think about sinful things. Joey—he's a year older than me—is always whispering terrible things to me. Take yesterday, for instance.

It was after Second Eating. I was sitting near our family trough, sort of nibbling, and looking down at Rhonda, who was taking a nap, when Joey walked over.

He looked around, to make sure there were no grown-ups near us, then sat down next to me. A kind of creepy feeling came over me, because I could tell by the expression on his face he wanted to talk about... things. And yet, I couldn't tell him to shut up, or get up myself and walk away. I sort of wanted to talk, too.

"Jock," he said, "what do you think happens when the Gods take a person away?"

I felt myself grow red all over. "You know, Joey," I giggled. "It's part of the Ritual. *When a person reaches the proper grace and girth, then will the Gods appear, and take him back to Earth—*"

"Carry him to their eating-troughs, is more like it, I'll bet," Joey mumbled. Then, seeing how shocked I must have looked, he said, "I'm just repeating what my father always said."

"Your father—" I stopped. How can you tell someone his father was a sinful, impious man, even if he knows it, himself?

"Do—do you really think that's what happens when the Gods' bubble-

ship takes someone through the Gods' hole, Joey?" Rhonda whimpered; she must have awakened while we were talking.

I lost my temper. Jumping to my feet, I hauled Rhonda to hers. "See what you've done, Joey?" I yelled. "Rhonda's mother was taken by the Gods last month, and here you come along and weaken her faith just when she needs it most!"

Joey sat there open-mouthed while I dragged Rhonda away to where I could give her a private talking-to.

Well, that's Joey for you. Now, today, when they took father, Rhonda cried and shamed my whole family. It just shows you, I guess; you've got to keep your faith strong all the time, or—

There goes the Fifth Feeding-bell! I mustn't be late—father never was!

Day 116 Y.A.C. 382

I HAD PLANNED to write in this journal every day, but now I see I won't be able to. When I started to write yesterday, I discovered I'd used up all the berry-juice in father's hollowed-out rock, and I had to spend the rest of the day squeezing out a new supply. And I ate more berries than I squeezed; so if Rhonda hadn't helped me, I probably wouldn't have had enough to write with, today.

In return for helping me squeeze berries, I promised to teach Rhonda to read and write, if I can find where father hid all his books. He was afraid that Peter and the others would tear them up, I guess, and he didn't have time to tell me where they were before the Gods took him.

It's a good idea for Rhonda to learn, I think. No matter what Peter says, reading and writing have been with us since the beginning of Captivity; I wouldn't like them to disappear if anything should happen to me. Besides, Rhonda can help me dry fronds for writing on. I have a few left from fa-

ther's hoard, but I'm using them up fast. I can't write small, the way he did...

I'll have to quit for now. Rhonda just arrived with the news that there's a big meeting going on near the main Supply-hole, and everyone is supposed to be there.

Day 117 Y.A.C. 382

Peter accused Joey of Improper Thinking! I can't write any more—there's going to be another meeting right after Third Feeding, and everyone's talking about how they're going to vote.

Day 118 Y.A.C. 382

Golly, what a meeting we had yesterday! Everyone in the Dome over the age of six was there, and the vote was against Joey... 219 to 166. I know the exact figures, because I did the counting. He's been sentenced to run—that's right, *run!*—twice around the rim of the Dome.

It's hard to imagine. He'll have to run for almost three hours, with folks stationed every few feet holding branches to whip him on. Peter's going to be in charge; that was voted on, too.

Well, it's a terrible thing, all right, but Joey brought it on himself. There's never been a punishment like that before in history—think of how much weight he'll lose! I don't think people would have voted for it, if Joey hadn't talked the way he did—and right out in public!

Peter started the meeting by repeating what he'd said the day before. He claimed he'd heard Joey talking to his younger brother, Mussa, the day my father was taken by the Gods. According to Peter, Joey had advised Mussa to hide if the Gods' bubble-ship ever came after him.

Everyone was horrified, of course, and Luigi, Head of the Dome—as the oldest man present always is—asked Joey if it were true.

Joey turned red all over, and hung his head, and said, yes, it was.

Luigi frowned and shook his head, as if he couldn't understand at all what was going on. "But, Joey," he asked, "why should he hide? Why should anyone? And anyway, where could a person hide from the Gods?"

Joey shrugged, and answered without looking up. "In one of the Privacy-huts, I guess. I don't know; maybe overturn a feeding-trough and hide under that—"

Somebody gasped, shocked at the thought of overturning a trough. Joey looked up then, and I was surprised to see that his face was red with anger—not shame. "The point is," he yelled, "we should try, at least—not let ourselves be picked up by the Gods with no more resistance than a—I don't know what!"

Luigi scratched his belly thoughtfully. "I don't understand, Joey; you don't make any sense at all. What is there to resist? We all live for the day the Gods come for us, don't we? Of course, when the great moment arrives for a person, he goes into the ritual Dance of Avoidance just before the Gods lift him into the bubble-ship, but that doesn't mean he's unhappy. Just the other way, in fact! The dance is only a custom—part of our tradition—"

"I'm afraid Joey doesn't put much faith in our tradition," Peter put in, softly.

That was when Joey lost his head. He jumped to his feet and waved his fist at Peter. "That's right—I don't! My father used to tell me that men were meant for something more than just for sitting around on the grass and talking and eating and getting picked up by the bubble-ship! He didn't know what it was, and neither do I, but I believe him! Traditions, huh? What about the tradition that men used to fight the Gods, until Captivity, and even afterwards? That's something I

believe in—and what's more, I think we should start fighting them again!"

So that's when Peter suggested punishing Joey, and the vote was taken.

In a way, you can't blame Peter, though I've always considered him a dirty fleshwaster, personally; always poking his fat nose into other people's private business. That's why I voted against him, and for Joey. Still, what Joey said was rank impiety, and you can't get away from that. Everyone knows the Gods brought us from Earth because we had sinned and grown thin, and put us here in the Dome to learn the ways of goodness. And when a man is truly good, as my father was, the Gods take him to themselves.

I guess we've gotten pretty good in the three hundred and eighty-two years after Captivity, but we probably have a long way to go; people like Joey and his father are only trying to push us back to sin. We might even anger the Gods again. You can tell how close we still are to sin by the number of people who voted against Peter. Maybe some did it because they don't like Peter, as I did; but I think most of them remember Joey's father, and believed some of the things he said, and now they're listening to Joey.

Well, the Bulb is beginning to dim, and Rhonda is asleep already alongside me. I wonder when she'll be old enough for me to take into one of the Privacy-huts. . .

Day 119 F.A.C. 382

THE GODS took Peter, today! The whole Dome is divided into two sides about it, and I think they'd be fighting each other if they weren't afraid of angering the Gods even more!

Everybody agrees the Gods *were* angry, but the question is: who were They angry at—Peter or Joey?

Rhonda says now that she had a feeling this morning that something was going to happen, but I think she's making it up. All I remember her saying

was, "Wake up, Jock! The First Feeding-bell is ringing! Let's eat fast, and find a place where we can watch Joey run!"

That doesn't sound as if she was expecting anything, does it? Besides Joey's punishment, that is, and we were all expecting that—and it was the one thing that never happened, anyway.

We ate quickly, though I wouldn't let Rhonda gobble her food. That's bad manners; a person who gobbles is liable to upchuck later on, and that's a terrible disgrace! Still, we were the first ones to reach the central hillock, and when we looked around we could see the entire Dome spread out before us.

It's a wonderful sight. I have to remember to go there more often. All around us, the green grass spread out to the very rim of the Dome, and everything on it stood out clearly in the bright light of the Bulb, directly overhead. Little clumps of berry-bushes and occasional trees, their fronds drooping broke up the greenness. Privacy-huts, made of woven fronds, were scattered wherever their occupants had left them.

Most of the people were still squatting around the feeding-troughs near the rim of the Dome. Some of the women, having finished eating, were nursing their babies. We could even see the circles of the Supply-holes on the Dome itself, near the rim. Rhonda claimed she could make out the bits of food lying near the Supply-holes which the men had dropped when they were collecting food for the troughs, but I don't believe it. She just knew the scraps were there, that's all.

SUDDENLY, Rhonda grabbed my arm and pointed. I turned. Peter and two other men were struggling with Joey. While we watched, the whippers began to take up their positions around the rim. The other folks—mostly the ones who had voted not to punish Joey—gathered in the center of the

Dome, on hillocks and up trees, to watch the punishment.

When everything was ready, Peter started hitting Joey with his branch. Joey ran, and Peter chased him, swatting at him. Naturally, Peter couldn't go as fast as Joey, and he wouldn't want to, anyway; the idea was for him to whip Joey a little ways, and then the next person would pick it up.

But it didn't work out that way. Peter got in maybe five good licks, and then the Gods'hole opened, and the bubble-ship came through!

Everybody stared up, stupid looks on their faces. It's only five days since the bubble-ship took father; usually, the ship doesn't come oftener than once in about thirty days. Joey and Peter were standing side by side, staring up, when the bubble-ship swooped down and took Peter. He didn't even have time to go into his Dance of Avoidance, and he'd been practicing for years!

Then the bubble-ship swooped up again, and disappeared into the Gods'hole.

And that's what started the big argument. Luigi and some of the others claimed the Gods took Peter because he was too good to stay with the rest of us sinners. They think the Gods were so angry at us for showing sin that They wouldn't even permit a Dance of Avoidance.

On the other hand, a lot of people—including Joey—don't think that's right. Joey said the Gods were angry, all right, but at Peter—for making Joey run and lose his fat.

"They don't care whether we sin or not," Joey said. "They just want us to stay nice and plump; I think They took Peter to punish him, not me!"

I have to admit it looked that way to me, too. But if the Gods take people to punish them, can They also take them as a reward for being in a state of grace and girth?

I don't want to think about it any more; every time I do, my mind starts spinning around in my head. I think

I'll go eat some berries and take a nap—if I can, with everyone in the Dome yelling at everyone else.

Day 131 V.A.C. 382

Rhonda uses up so much berry-juice practicing her alphabet, I haven't been able to write anything in my journal in days. She isn't very good, even if she does know all the letters; she still can't make them look right.

I'm worried about how I'm going to teach her how to spell words, because I haven't found my father's books yet. The one I learned out of would be good for Rhonda, but I'd like to read some of the others—the ones father always claimed I was too young to see. I'd also like to read his journal before the fronds fall apart.

Two funny things happened yesterday. I told my mother I was looking for father's books, and from the way she acted, I got a funny feeling she knew where they were. But why wouldn't she want to tell me?

Then, while I was talking to her, I noticed Joey standing near us, listening. When mother walked away, Joey came up to me, and said, "If you're really looking for something to read, Jock, I'll let you see some of my father's journal."

I was surprised. "Why, I didn't know your father could read and write, Joey."

He grinned. "There's a lot of things you don't know, Jock. But I'll bring the journal to you one of these days; it makes good reading." He walked away, leaving me staring after him.

Do you suppose Joey knows how to read, himself?

Day 147 V.A.C. 382

Right after Fourth Feeding, today, Rhonda started weaving a Privacy-hut! Could that mean...?

Day 148 V.A.C. 382

It did!

2

Day 12 Y.A.C. 383

WHAT WITH one thing and another, I haven't had much time lately even to write in my journal, it seems. I haven't had time for much of anything except Rhonda. Now I'm sorry, though, that I put Joey off every time he tried to show me his father's journal. Today he found me alone for a moment, and offered it again, and this time I read it.

It upset me, but I think my mother upset me even more. I'm going to write it all out and see if I can get it clear in my own mind.

As I read the fronds of the journal, I was only interested at first, in the different way Joey's father made the letters of his words. They were much shorter and bent over than the letters I make, or the ones I remember from those parts of my father's journal he ever showed me. Most of the entries were like mine and my father's, though—just reportings of little things that happened in the daily life of the Dome.

There were also sections where he worried about the same kinds of things Joey did; he would wonder whether the Gods were really the souls of people who had been taken in the bubble-ship, and then decide that They weren't. He repeated all the old, profane legends about Them being monsters who wanted to eat humans. He even wrote something in one place about maybe catching a bubble-ship and breaking it open to find out what the Gods actually looked like.

I skipped most of that because it embarrassed me. Then I came to an entry that made me sit up straight with surprise. It went something like this: *Four of us met secretly today to discuss the possibility of starting another tunnel. The meeting came to no decisions. Manuel pointed out that three*

times since Captivity, tunneling out of the Dome has been tried, and every time it has ended disastrously. Nathan was worried about Peter and the other Traditionalists. He feels their influence is too strong in the Dome these days, and they might turn everyone against us. Naomi was on my side at the beginning, but, as usual, she ended up by going along with Nathan. So the tunnel idea was put off, and I doubt if it will ever come up again during my lifetime. Nathan has a fine mind, better than mine, I'm afraid, but I wish he could show more courage.

There was more, but I never got around to reading it; I got angry and started yelling at Joey. After all, Nathan was my father, and Naomi is my mother!

Joey and I almost came to blows over the matter. I told him my father was the most pious man who ever lived in the Dome and fattened for grace; anyone who said different was a dirty fleshwaster. Joey said I couldn't call his father a fleshwaster, and that I was the biggest fool in the Dome. If my mother hadn't been attracted by all the yelling, there's no telling what might have happened.

Anyway, as soon as I saw her, I told her what Joey's father had written before the Gods had taken him, and asked if it were true.

She looked into my eyes for a long minute, and then said that it was. I started crying, and she got angry. "Jock," she said, "you're a good boy in many ways, but you made your father an unhappy man during his lifetime; and the Gods are witness that I've given you up for lost long ago." She stopped, and turned her head away.

"What have I done—" I began, but she interrupted me.

"You never used your own mind!" she snapped. "Nathan and I didn't want you to accept all our ideas and aims unthinkingly, just because they were ours—we wanted you to come to

an intelligent realization of the truth, yourself. We were willing to help a little, of course, but the only things you ever listened to were the spoutings of the Traditionalists. Anything your father or I, or Joey's father, ever said on any Anti-Ritual subject shocked you so much that we learned to leave you alone. Your father died ashamed of his own son, Jock."

Then she turned and walked away from me.

Joey had disappeared too, sometime during my mother's speech. I could look for Rhonda, I suppose, but I don't really want to see anyone else at the moment.

Writing it all down hasn't helped very much. I still don't understand. My own father and mother—Anti-Gods! I feel as if I'm going to upchuck...

Day 41 Y.A.C. 383

I'VE BEEN avoiding mother, lately, and I think she's been avoiding me. Most of the time, Rhonda and I sit with Joey, talking.

It's not that I can bring myself to believe the things he says, but I'm trying to understand just what it was that turned my parents against tradition. If there is any truth to these crazy ideas that the Gods are not really Gods, but inhuman beings who raise people to eat them—then being alive is a horrible thing! I can't accept that.

One thing Joey was able to make clear to me, though, was why my father and mother didn't try harder to get me to understand what they believed in. He claims that only a couple of years ago, it was actually dangerous to be caught speaking against the Ritual.

"You don't remember Manuel, do you, Jock?" he asked, and I had to shake my head. "I do, just barely; he died when I was about five. Peter and the Traditionalists claimed Manuel died because he was too impure to be taken up by the bubble-ship, but my

father always told me Manuel had been strangled in his sleep by the Traditionalists. Father said a lot of people used to die that way."

"Well, how come nothing ever happened to your father?" I demanded.

Joey smiled. "My father was too strong a man; they were afraid to go near him, so he could say what he pleased. Your father wasn't, and if he'd ever said anything anti-traditional to you, and you let it out, it would have been the end of him."

"But—I haven't heard of any stranglings, lately, Joey."

He shook his head. "No. The older Traditionalists were taken by the Gods, and no one seems to have replaced them; Peter was one of the last. My father told me once that things were much worse when he was a boy, and his father told him the same thing. People aren't as violently pious as they used to be; I don't know why. Maybe it's a good thing, though. I'd probably be dead, otherwise."

So now I can understand a little better why my father didn't take me into his confidence, though I still can't accept his ideas.

Rhonda seems to go along with them, I've noticed. She's always asking Joey questions, and I think she prefers his answers to mine—even though mine are strict tradition. And I can't even fight with her about them, because she might get upset, and I wouldn't want that to happen while she's pregnant.

Day 88 Y.A.C. 383

MOTHER came to me today, much to my surprise. We haven't had much to do with each other since our argument. She told me she's afraid the Gods will take her soon, and then no one will know where father's books and journal are hidden.

She made me promise that, even if I were horrified by what I read in

them, I wouldn't destroy them or turn them over to Traditionalists to destroy. I promised—first because I want very much to read them, and second because lately I haven't been impressed too much by the Traditionalists.

Luigi is their leader, now, and he makes lots of speeches. I listen to them, of course, but there are a lot of things that bother me which he never explains well.

The business about Peter being taken by the Gods, for example; a lot of people are still talking about that. Peter was a strong Traditionalist, all right, but he wasn't a really good man; he wasn't even very fat. If the Gods wanted to show Their anger against Joey, why didn't They wait until after he had been punished? And if They really loved Peter, why didn't They give him time to go into a Dance of Avoidance? The Dance is not an honor for the whole Dome, but a personal thing; according to the Ritual, the better and fatter a man is, the longer he will be permitted to dance. If that's not true, how can you believe anything?

And then there's the question of Earth. If Earth is an unreal place—as the Traditionalists claim—where a person goes after the Gods take him, and where mankind lived before it fell from grace and was brought to life in the Dome, where did father get his books? I've read one and seen the others, so you can't tell me they don't exist; yet they were never made in the Dome.

I told mother all this, and she seemed relieved and surprised; tomorrow she'll take me to where father hid his books.

Day 91 Y.A.C. 383

The Gods took Luigi today; he danced well. Anyway, mother won't be going for at least another thirty days. She showed me where father buried his

books and journal, but we haven't dug them up yet. Somebody built a Privacy-hut over the spot, and the ground is packed hard. Rhonda and I dig all day with our fingers, and it's hard work. I don't think we have much further to dig, though.

Day 118 Y.A.C. 383

I have been reading. Sometimes I wish I'd never learned how, and sometimes I thank the Gods for being so fortunate. When Rhonda and I got down to where the books were buried, the first thing we found was a frond on which my father had written a note to me. He said he was sure I wouldn't be reading it if my mother hadn't decided I could be trusted; he repeated what she'd said about not turning everything over to the Traditionalists, even if I couldn't believe what I read.

This is perhaps the last storehouse of human knowledge, Jock, he wrote, and it is up to you to preserve it. We've never been close, you and I, I know; but I have faith in the quality of your mind, once you learn to use it. Don't believe what people tell you, son—don't even believe what you read in these books, if you don't want to. But learn to think for yourself; learn to watch for the truth; and learn to accept it when you find it, even if it's unpleasant. Be good to Rhonda.

The first book under that, was the Speller father had used to teach me to read and write; I gave it to Rhonda, and she went off to practice with it.

There were six books under the Speller and last of all, the pile of fronds which made up father's journal. I glanced through one book, which was called, "Anthology o' Verse". There are a lot of things in it called *Poems*; but I couldn't understand what they were supposed to mean. I

put the book aside and picked up the journal, hoping father would explain them. Besides, I wanted to see if he said anything about the Gods, or Joey's father, and the tunnel.

I HAVEN'T read the whole journal, yet; father kept it much more regularly than I keep mine. He was always writing; that's how he became so fat and graceful. I skipped from frond to frond, ignoring the ones that just described ordinary events, like people being taken by the Gods, or the birth of new babies. Then I came to an entry dated: Day 1 Y.A.C. 376. I'm going to copy part of it, because I'll want to read it again, and the frond is falling apart.

The new year was celebrated with much rejoicing and ritual, last night, by nearly everyone in the Dome. Every year at this time I am unable to make up my mind whether to hate the human race, or admire it for its ability to adjust. Here we are, the last pitiful remnant of a creature which once owned an entire world, condemned to live out our short meaningless lives in an artificial enclosure on an alien planet. When we reach one third of the age of humans once aspired to, we are taken to some nameless place, to fulfill some nameless function in the lives of the creatures we call the Gods.

Yet, do we despair? I do, perhaps, and so do a few other malcontents, but most people are more than content. They enjoy life hugely; they look forward eagerly to their early end. They have built up a tradition which makes it all proper, which makes them feel it is the only way humans could or should live.

Three centuries and more ago, when that tiny group of surviving

humans was carried off from a shattered, dying Earth they knew what was happening to them, what had happened, and what was likely to happen. They were truly heroic; in some unguessable way, they even managed to smuggle a few books along with them.

And they told their children about Earth, and about the monsters we now call Gods. They instructed their descendants to keep up the fight, to try to break loose from the Dome—somehow—and win back to Earth. We know they taught these things—all the so-called "profane" legends attest to that.

But humanity, unable to accomplish in the Dome what a free and numerous mankind had not been able to do even on its own planet, turned away from these legends. Unable to free itself from a horrible existence, mankind did not destroy itself in its own hopelessness—it refused to accept the reality of the horror outside the Dome! Man adapted to a meaningless world and the certainty of early death, by making that death meaningful, and the world somehow attractive! I wonder if humanity has always had that capacity...

So this was my father. An Anti-God—or something worse. He did not merely turn from the Gods in his thoughts, and from the Ritual, but he was against our very ideas of goodness and grace.

Suddenly, as I write this, the picture comes to my mind of my father doing his Dance of Avoidance. He—he meant it! He did not want to be taken by the Gods! My father was...evil, and my flesh crawls at the thought of him.

And yet, if he was evil, why did the Gods take him? If They could take a

man like him—no matter *how* fat he was—then the only thing I can believe is that They don't really care at all about a man's state of grace! But if that's true, then my father was not an evil man, after all—merely one who spoke the truth. Then Joey's father spoke the truth, and so does Joey—and the Ritual and all the traditions are nothing but lies!

How do I learn the real truth? Whom *can* I trust?

Day 120 Y.A.C. 383

THE GODS took mother today. She danced well, but I could not bring myself to show the proper happiness. Then, just as the bubble-ship swallowed her weaving form, I upchuck—disgracing myself thoroughly. Rhonda cried, but she always cries lately when the Gods come; I no longer have the heart—or the will—to reproach her.

I am losing my faith, I think, and the horrible part is I no longer seem to care very much. I no longer seem to care about anything.

Day 201 Y.A.C. 383

NOW I AM a father. Rhonda gave birth to a boy, today, and we are going to call it Nathan, after my father. Both she and the baby are in good health and fast asleep in the Privacy-hut. I shall follow the ancient custom, and sleep alone in the open, tonight.

One thing that has been bothering me about the birth, though, is that Rhonda has been pregnant for only two hundred days. I know that is very normal in the Dome; but if I am to believe the book on Biology I have been reading, a human pregnancy took much longer on Earth.

Can it be that we are changing physically? Once we lived for sixty or seventy years, or even more. Now it is the rare person who sees more than twenty-five New Years. Are we therefore maturing more quickly and having

our babies in less time? I mentioned this to Joey, the other day, and he said he doubted it. "Maybe our days are longer, or our years shorter, than on Earth, Jock," he said. "Of course. I don't know much about biology, but—"

"Neither do I," I told him; "but I know for certain we've changed in one way, at least."

He looked surprised. "We're fatter than most humans ever were," I said. "We believe that puts us in a state of grace; on Earth they didn't, of course. But... still, we don't have any really thin persons among us—at any age, which I gather from the book is unusual. And our beautifully fat ones would have been considered abnormal in the old days."

Joey scratched his belly thoughtfully. "Well, maybe the Gods have been fooling around with us in some way, to make us fat," he offered.

I shrugged. "Maybe. As I said, I don't know enough about it. All I know is that our year is three hundred and sixty-five days, just as it was on Earth, according to the books. Whether it was the Gods or us, we've changed."

Joey said he didn't feel any different, and walked off, but I still think I'm right. What I'm wondering about is: if we're really changing, what other changes are likely to show up?

3

Day 286 Y.A.C. 383

AFTER THINKING about it—and thinking about it for the Gods know how many days—today I finally made up my mind. I went to Joey and told him. I've decided to try to tunnel out of the Dome, and that I wanted him to help me. Even if it angers the Gods, I've got to learn what lies outside, if anything does. I've got to learn the truth.

Joey seemed surprised. I think he was satisfied to spend his time talking against the Gods, but he wasn't prepared to really *do* anything. I don't want to talk; I want to know—and if it turns out that the Gods are frauds, then I want to fight them somehow.

He did suggest, though, that we try to get some more people to help us, and I agreed. We'll have to start sounding out possible Anti-Gods. It is hard to believe that I have become one, myself...and not only an Anti-God, but a leader among Anti-Gods!

Day 333 Y.A.C. 383

Joey and I have two other men definitely lined up to help with the tunnel, and three possibilities. Rhonda wants to join, too, but I'm against that; I want her to spend her time practicing writing. If anything happens to me, I want to be sure there will be someone to teach my son to read and write.

Day 17 Y.A.C. 384

Tonight, as soon as the Bulb dims, we start the tunnel under the Rim of the Dome. There are six of us, at present—myself; Joey; Armand and his brother, Keith; and a girl named Laura. She's only ten, and probably won't be much help. Joey's brother, Mussa, was going to join us; but his wife just built her Privacy-hut, so I guess we can't count on him for a while.

We're all excited and more than a little frightened. I guess it's because the profane legends have it that there were at least three other attempts to dig tunnels before in the history of the Dome, and none of them were successful. Well, there's only one way to find out why.

Day 94 Y.A.C. 384

Digging is hard work. We have only our hands to work with, though the

books say men once used things called shovels for the purpose. The ground is packed hard, and we have to take turns digging in the hole, since we can't all fit in it at once. Besides, we can't work too long or too hard because that would waste our fat. Then it might be noticed by the Gods or—worst of all—by the Traditionalists.

To keep the hole a secret, Laura plaited a Privacy-hut to cover it, blushing furiously all the while, because she isn't really ready to do it yet—or even married, for that matter. As far as the last is concerned, though, I don't think she'll have to wait very long if Joey keeps looking at her that way.

All my berry-juice had dried up since the last time I made an entry in this journal, but Rhonda gave some of hers. She claims she has a special way of collecting berries, but she won't tell me about it until she gets it perfect. I'm too tired to ask any questions.

Day 166 Y.A.C. 384

Joey and Laura were married today, and high time. She's building a Privacy-hut for this very night! Since neither Joey nor Laura have any parents, I married them—my right, according to custom, as Joey's best friend.

Day 181 Y.A.C. 384

Joey and Laura haven't been much help on the tunnel, lately; but fortunately, Joey's brother, Mussa, has taken to coming around and giving us a hand. The work goes slowly, but it goes.

Day 309 Y.A.C. 384

Rhonda is pregnant again.

Day 350 Y.A.C. 384

So is Laura! One good thing about that is that we should see more of Joey at the tunnel.

Day 22 Y.A.C. 385

Today Rhonda showed me her berry-secret. There isn't very much to it, yet it's a strange thing to watch.

She sits down under a berry-bush and stares up at it. Sitting very still, barely breathing, she "thinks" up at a berry; anyway, that's what she calls it. All I know is that her face wrinkles as if she has a headache, and pretty soon the berry falls to the ground. Then she "thinks" at another berry.

Rhonda can't explain how she does it, and when I tried it, nothing happened. It certainly is strange.

Day 98 Y.A.C. 385

JOEY AND I are certain we've passed beyond the Rim of the Dome with our tunnel. It's frightening to think, when you're down there alone in the dark, digging away with your hands, that you're actually outside the Dome! I guess the fact that there actually is ground—or anything, for that matter—beyond the Dome proves something, though I'm not sure what.

Our biggest worry is spreading the dirt we dig out of the tunnel around the Dome before we go to sleep, so there'll be no sign of our digging. Lately, we spend more time doing that than we do on the tunnel, itself.

Day 103 Y.A.C. 385

Armand is beginning to bother me. Ever since Joey and I decided we had dug beyond the Dome, Armand has been acting queerly. Yesterday, he came over to my trough during Third Feeding and indicated that he wanted to talk to me. "Jock," he said, "maybe we should stop working on the tunnel. I—I'm worried."

"About what?" I demanded.

"The Gods, Jock. I know we're doing this just to prove the truth of the traditions, but... I don't know. If the Gods had wanted us—"

"Listen, Armand!" I told him an-

grily, "I don't know whether the Ritual is right, or whether the profane legends are; but of one thing I'm sure—I'm not going to take anybody's word for anything. I've got to find out for myself!"

Then I calmed down a little. "As for you, Armand, you can do as you please. If you want to quit, I guess we can get along without you."

That seemed to worry him even more. "No, of course not, Jock," he said; "I don't want to quit. I was only talking."

He wandered away, and I began to wonder if I made a mistake in cutting him off like that. It might have been better to learn exactly what he had on his mind.

Day 141 Y.A.C. 385

Rhonda gave birth today. This time, it's a girl, and we're going to call her Angie, after Rhonda's mother. Maybe this isn't the time to think about such things, but I can't help asking myself why we bring children into the Dome.

If we are really being raised by the Gods as a kind of cattle—and I *still* find it hard to believe that—then perhaps our best defiance of them would be to let ourselves die out.

On the other hand, once we do that, the fight is over—if there is a fight to be fought. Only by staying alive and breeding more generations can we hope to have any chance at all of winning.

Life, according to the biology book, had been going on for untold number of years even before Captivity. An unbroken line, the book claims, stretches from the first tiny bit of shapeless protoplasm to any creature alive today. Types of life may disappear, as individuals do, but the line goes on from generation to generation.

I guess it's up to me to pass it along one more notch. Even if I don't learn all the answers, or win all the battles, one of my distant descendants might. Anyway, I don't have much choice in

the matter, now. *That* problem belongs to little Nathan and Angie.

Day 194 Y.A.C. 385

Now Joey is a father. Laura had a girl, too; to listen to Joey, you'd think she was the only baby girl ever to be born in the Dome. What interests me much more is the tunnel. Less than a year more, maybe?

Day 3 Y.A.C. 386

TODAY IS my birthday, and the most miserable day of my life. I suppose I'm lucky to be alive, but I don't much care. That damned flesh-waster, Armand!

Two years work, gone as if it never existed. We should have watched him, I suppose, but who would have believed...

I guess it must have been the New Year's rites which finally made up Armand's mind for him. They are impressive, I know, what with the solemn, chanting promise of everyone in the Dome to give up the ways of sin, to turn to the Gods for leadership in goodness and girth. The Ritual meal in the evening, at Fifth Feeding, is enough to affect anyone.

Anyway, Armand went to the Traditionalists and told them about the tunnel.

The first Joey and I and the others knew about it, the strongest men in the Dome were holding us down on the ground, helpless, while a bunch of other people filled in the tunnel and packed it tight. It took them eight hours to fill up what we were almost two years in digging.

And we were so close! I'm too sick to write any more...

Day 211 Y.A.C. 386

Joey and Laura and Rhonda and Mussa have been working on me in relays. Today I gave in; we're going to start another tunnel.

Day 65 Y.A.C. 387

Since Rhonda started keeping a journal of her own, there hasn't been much point in my putting regular entries in mine. Besides, I haven't had much time—or much inclination, for that matter. Rhonda can record the day-to-day occurrences of the Dome as well as I could, and my time is of much more use in the tunnel, or in teaching Nathan to write.

It's about Nathan that I want to make this entry. He startled both Rhonda and myself today, considerably. Nathan is old enough to walk, of course, but he still prefers to spend most of his time sitting near one of his parents—which is normal enough—and good for growing fat.

Today, while I squeezed berries for Rhonda, and she "thought" them off the bush, he sat at her feet watching her quietly enough. Then, suddenly, he crawled over and sat right beside her, wrinkling his face up at the bush, imitating her perfectly.

Rhonda and I grinned at each other—and then a berry fell into Nathan's lap! While we stared, he began to "think" again, and brought down another berry. We had to make him stop, or he would have emptied the bush.

According to Rhonda, she only learned how to do that trick when she was almost twelve: she'd never done anything like it when she was younger. And she still can't bring down a berry as quickly as Nathan! There's something about this talent of my wife's—and now my son's—that excites me tremendously. I can't quite put my finger on it, though...

Day 118 Y.A.C. 387

The new tunnel is going well; I think we're beyond the Dome, once more. We're more experienced, this time, and we're going faster. If only we can keep it from the Traditionalists!

Day 26 Y.A.C. 388

Catastrophe...

Oh, Gods—the stupidity of humans! If a planet of people, free, and with all their ancient knowledge and weapons right at hand, couldn't fight off the attack of the Gods, what chance would we have here in the Dome?

And yet, we had to try. And Keith has paid for our curiosity.

Last night, it was. We knew we were very close to our goal, but still it happened unexpectedly. I had been digging, and my fingers were stiff; so I stopped and let Keith take my place. Aside from the weariness, none of us could stay too long in the tunnel, anyhow. The closer we got to the surface outside the Dome, the colder the ground became.

So, while Keith descended into the opening, I sat around with Joey and Mussa, rubbing my fingers together to get rid of the numbness. Then, suddenly, we heard a muffled shriek of terror from Keith.

The three of us leaped to our feet and headed for the tunnel... and then we stopped, and backed away in fear. *The tunnel was filling up before our eyes!*

As we watched, dirt bubbled up in the opening, then smoothed out level with the ground. Green dots appeared on the brown circle, and turned into tiny shoots of grass. Another tunnel gone as if it never existed—and this time because we were successful.

We couldn't hide the fact, of course; a number of people had been awakened by Keith's scream, and had come crowding around in time to see the tunnel fill up. Armand—the fleshwaster, oh, the filthy fleshwaster!—was one of them, and he immediately wanted to know where his brother was. So we had to tell him.

He swung into a chant of praise for the Gods, for removing the symbol of our sinning, and for punishing his evil

brother. Not one word of sorrow for poor Keith!

Folks began to mutter darkly about our transgressing the traditions, but nobody offered to do anything about it. Just like when Armand exposed our first attempt, the more violent Traditionalists remembered what had happened to Peter, and decided against trying to punish us. Some of them don't seem to be as eager to be taken to the Gods as they like to pretend.

The tunnel is gone, and there will not be another attempt, at least in my lifetime. Where's the point? All that work and time, gone for nothing—and Keith gone too, besides.

I wonder whether the Gods took him alive—for their troughs, as Joey claims—or whether he is buried somewhere in the tunnel...

Day 319 Y.A.C. 388

BOTH RHONDA and Laura had babies today, within an hour of each other. Two boys, and Joey and I have agreed to call them both Keith.

Joey has been after me to help start another tunnel, but I won't hear of it; the idea is ridiculous. Besides, I could no longer work up any enthusiasm. I'm content to sit under a tree and read my father's books. There is one book—the book of Poetry—which interests me more these days than the book of Biology, or that completely mystifying work called: "Glassblowing—An Exciting Hobby for Everyone".

Poems are hard to understand, too. Most of them use words which have no meaning at all, at least in the Dome. Maybe they meant something back on Earth. But there is one poem called: "Ode to Liberty", written by a man named Shelley, which excites me more and more each time I re-read it.

I don't know what he's talking about most of the time—what was Athens? Or the Tomb of Arminius? Or Saxon Alfred? I think the word "Sun" was

another way of saying "Bulb", though I'm not sure.

Just the same, even though I don't understand half of what he is saying, I feel he was speaking to me when he wrote:

*Lift the victory-flashing sword,
And cut the snaky knots of this foul
gordian word, which, weak itself as
stubble, yet can bind
Into a mass, irrefragably firm,
The axes and the rods which awe man-
kind...*

I doubt if I'll ever really understand that. And yet, somehow, somewhere inside me I think I do understand it.

Now it is time for me to give Nathan a writing lesson. It's hard for me to write very much, myself. My fingers grow tired quickly from the years of digging.

I suppose I am no longer good for anything but to eat and grow gracefully fat, until the day the Gods come for me...

4

Day 2 Y.A.C. 389

ANOTHER New Year. In the past, I've been too tired from the nights of digging in the tunnel to pay too much attention to the New Year's rites. Yesterday, though, Rhonda and Nathan and I joined everyone else in the Dome. Everyone except Joey, or course.

It was very impressive, at first. Everyone in the Dome lined up along the Rim, facing the gray, curving wall. At a wailing signal from Armand—the fleshwaster has become a leader of the Traditionalists—we all knelt, pressing our hands against the cold surface of the Dome. We bowed our heads and closed our eyes... and wailed.

I tried to lose myself in the agony of

the moment. In a loud voice, I screamed out my sins to the Gods. I chanted that I would be good, that I would eat and grow fat; I pleaded to be taken up from the Dome and brought to the Earth of the Gods.

And all the time, the skin of my palms contracted against the cold of the Dome's surface, and I longed to throw myself against it and break through to the other side.

It was no good; belief in the goodness of the Gods has gone from me. I cannot push the reaches of my mind back into the tiny area it occupied before I read my father's books, before we started working on the tunnel. I do not know what the Gods are; but I do know that I am no longer a child, and never will be again.

The chanting-period was not even half over when I raised my head and opened my eyes, mopping the perspiration from my face. Rhonda was staring at me over Nathan's bowed head, a look of agony in her black eyes.

Softly, we climbed to our feet, so as not to disturb the others. I made a motion to lift Nathan away from the Dome, but Rhonda stopped me.

"Let him be," she whispered. "He's only a child; he'll grow up soon enough."

I nodded, and the two of us walked away from the Rim of the Dome, past an empty, spattered food-trough, around a bubbling water-fountain, to the central hillock, where Joey sat alone under a berry bush. Rhonda was crying gently as we sat down next to him.

The three of us sat there for the rest of the day, while the people of the Dome went through the rest of the New Year's rites. We watched in silence as the men, women and children got to their feet and began to shuffle slowly, in single file, along the Rim, their heads bowed, their right hands brushing the surface of the Dome. And we listened to them crying out their sins.

"Why?" Joey demanded suddenly, his voice fierce. "Why are people such fools? Why would they rather worship the Gods than fight them? Why would they rather cry than shout in anger?"

"I suppose it's more human to cry," Rhonda said in a whisper. "It's easier to believe the Gods have pity in Them for us, than to believe They think only of Themselves, and not at all of us."

She frowned. "Maybe that's the difference between humans and—and something else. A human knows he wouldn't want to hurt anyone else, and he can't really believe anyone or anything would want to hurt him. So, if at the beginning of Captivity the Gods insisted, in some way, that we eat and grow fat, the humans came to believe that it was right and good for us to do so. It *had* to be that way, or—"

The Fifth Feeding-bell sounded. Everyone in the Dome gathered around the family troughs for the Ritual meal. They stuffed food in their mouths—more than at any other meal—and the tears flowed freely from their eyes as they ate.

After a while, Rhonda and Joey and I grew hungry; we went to a trough and ate, but we refused to cry...

Day 18 Y.A.C. 389

It's Joey's idea, really, but we all helped work out the details. Not a tunnel, this time, but an attempt to capture a bubble-ship of the Gods!

We'll roll up long fronds from the trees, knot them together to make lengthy, strong ropes. These we'll weave loosely, until we have a net we can toss over a bubble-ship when it swoops down to pick up someone. Then—we'll see...

I don't really have much faith in it. The chances are we'll all die—but I'd willingly give my life for one short look at the Gods, and the inside of Their bubble-ship. Joey and Mussa think we might find some sort of weapon inside the ship...

Day 78 Y.A.C. 389

In some ways, making the frond ropes is even harder than digging a tunnel. The fronds kept falling apart, until we discovered that continual soaking in one of the water-fountains, after the fronds have been rolled and tied, helps to keep them pliant and whole.

Also, Joey, Mussa and I are too fat these days to climb trees after fronds, so we had to put the children to work doing it.

Everybody wonders what the ropes are for, but we don't tell them, of course, and they can't figure it out. Armand is sure we're up to no good, though he has to admit he doesn't know how. He'll find out!

Day 227 Y.A.C. 389

THAT STRANGE talent of Nathan's...

We'd grown so used to his casually "thinking" berries off bushes, we'd stopped noticing it. Even when little Angie started imitating him, Rhonda and I barely talked about it.

But today! Today I told him to climb a tree and bring down a particularly large frond, and he refused. He's only a child, and I hated to insist, but the work must go on, so I got angry, and told him he had to.

Whereupon he scowled at me, wrinkled his face up at the frond, and brought it crashing down!

Then he smiled up at me, smugly, and said: "Shall I bring down another?"

My own son! Is he human? I begin to fear...

Day 1 Y.A.C. 390

New Year. Also the start of my last decade in the Dome. In two days, I shall be nineteen years old, and that *is* old, as life goes in the Dome. There are few around who have seen many more New Years than I. And one more person goes every thirty days...

Day 132 Y.A.C. 390

The net is almost finished. We'd have been done long ago, if we didn't have to wait so long for new fronds to grow. Rhonda and I are keeping our journals to a minimum. She writes much more than I do, but she uses only the discarded fronds.

Angie has taken to "thinking" fronds down along with Nathan. As far as I know, they're the only two people in the Dome who have the ability; even Rhonda can't do it.

Day 21 Y.A.C. 391

We finished the net today. The next time the bubble-ship comes through the Gods'-hole, Joey, Laura, Rhonda, Mussa, his wife, Tina and myself will grab the net and throw it over the ship. We'll try to drag it down where we can all jump on it.

The next time...

Day 45 Y.A.C. 391

The net failed and Mussa is gone. Joey and Rhonda are trying to comfort Tina.

We tried though the Gods be witness to that! When the bubble-ship came—for Armand as it turned out, and we almost didn't have the heart to make the attempt to stop it this time—when it came, we leaped forward the instant Armand was swallowed up, and swung the net up over the ship.

The bubble-ship just kept going straight up, as if it didn't even notice the net. Finally we all had to let go and fall back. All, except Mussa. He hung on; a round, white spot in the air, while the bubble-ship lifted both him and the net towards the Gods'-hole. Then, just before it entered the hole, the bubble-ship swung slightly to one side, and Mussa disappeared within.

Now what? Shall we try to break down the Dome with our bare hands?

Day 203 Y.A.C. 391

Tina's second baby was born to-

day—Mussa's last, of course. Tina named the baby Mussa. It is *such* an empty, impotent memorial...

Day 110 Y.A.C. 392

I married Nathan to Ruth, Joey's oldest girl. Both children are rather young for marriage, of course, but Joey and Rhonda both agree with me that it is a good idea. I'd like to live long enough to see Nathan's first child. Will it inherit his talent for "thinking"?

Day 288 Y.A.C. 392

Rhonda is pregnant again. However powerless we may be to fight the Gods, one thing we certainly seem able to do...

Day 30 Y.A.C. 393

The Gods took Joey's wife, Laura, today! It's hard to believe; she was barely twenty. Joey is grief-stricken; I don't know what to say to him. My son—little Keith—laughed out loud at the sight of Laura doing her Dance of Avoidance, and before I thought, I'd slapped him hard across the mouth...

Day 59 Y.A.C. 393

THEY'VE taken Rhonda! I can hardly write, the tears are coming so fast, and yet there is something I must record—even Rhonda would have done it in my place, had I been the one taken...

Rhonda, swallowed up by those damnable Gods! Too fat and too pregnant to do anything but cower in terror as the bubble-ship descended. I tried to leap upon it, but Joey and Nathan held me back...but that's not what I want to write about.

As the bubble-ship rose upward, with Rhonda inside, Nathan let go of me and stood up straight. He waved his fist at the Gods' ship, and his face contorted with fury.

And the bubble-ship of the Gods trembled and stopped for a second in the air!

It was only the briefest of seconds, but what a second that was! No one in the Dome will ever forget it—or forget to tell his children about it.

We made Nathan promise never to do it again, no matter what. *Once*, and the Gods will probably consider it a minor disorder in the workings of the bubble-ship. Another such occurrence, though, and they might become suspicious. Nothing must happen to Nathan or Angie or Keith, or their children. Generation after generation, they will have to practice their power secretly, while more and more children in the Dome are born with the ability to “think.” And then, some day, when the people of the Dome are ready, they will rise up—

But I don’t want to think about that any more. What do I care what happens untold years from now? Rhonda is gone!

Day 109 Y.A.C. 393

Joey and I have been discussing the taking of Rhonda and Laura at such early ages. He pointed out that both of them were pregnant. “I suppose the Gods’ eating tastes are changing,” he said. “If Their idea of good feeding is—”

“Don’t say such things, Joey,” I screamed. “I refuse to believe it! It’s too horrible!”

“Then what’s your explanation?” he demanded.

I shook my head, spraying hot tears. “I don’t know,” I mumbled. “Maybe They want the babies to be born outside, so They can experiment on them—I don’t know. But why do we have to believe They—They *eat* us when They take us outside?”

“You can believe anything you like, Jock,” he told me. “But first, figure out why They fatten us.”

I can’t answer that question—or for that matter, many others—but for all of the way I hate the Gods, I can’t accept the idea that we’re nothing but a



source of food to them. There’s only one way to find out, I suppose, and it will come soon enough. In spite of everything, I grow fatter every day.

Day 5 Y.A.C. 394

I noticed Nathan and Ruth coming out of a Privacy-but today. It’s hard to believe: Ruth is not yet nine years old! How swiftly the human race is changing within this Dome! Perhaps I may yet live to see whether Nathan’s child inherits his father’s strange talent.

Day 130 Y.A.C. 394

Ruth is pregnant!

Day 328 Y.A.C. 394

According to the books, the word is *Grandfather*. A strange word to us here in the Dome, but now it applies to me. Nathan tells me he and Ruth have decided to call the child Clarence.

I wish Clarence well. The hope of humanity lies within his brain.

Day 351 Y.A.C. 395

And today the Gods took Joey. I am numb, somehow; I don’t feel the proper grief. He was my friend. We labored side by side, and we lost together, and we argued much.

Now he is gone, and I don’t even weep for him. I am beyond tears, I suppose. The traditional thing to say is that he danced well. Joey would not

want that; I will say only that he fought well.

Day 280 Y.A.C. 395

THE LAST thing I wanted to see in this life has happened, and I can go to the Gods content. Clarence, less than a year old, has shown that he has inherited the power to "think"; today he brought down his first berry. There is hope for the human race. If Clarence could do it this early in his life, it must mean the talent is even more pronounced in him than it was in his father.

Nathan has started his journal. At the moment, he is busy copying passages from the journals of my father and Rhonda. There is little to copy from mine that is important. I never had their clearness of vision, their peculiar insight into, and sympathy for, the ways of mankind. Still, I do not think my life a total failure, as I look back on it. There were the two tunnels, and the net, and my children. It is enough for one man's lifetime. The future belongs to Clarence.

I doubt if I will live to make many more entries. As far as I can tell, I am one of the fattest men in the Dome. The Leader of the Dome is less than a year older than I am, and he is much thinner. Everybody behaves toward me as if I am soon to be taken; I am ready, I suppose.

As I awake each morning, I find myself staring around me at the Dome and the people in it. It is a prison I have never been able to leave, I know, and yet it is also the only place I have ever known. I wonder if Shelley and the other poets could have found inspiration here for their poetry? Perhaps it is significant that no poetry has been written since Captivity, unless you count the New Year's chants, and the words of the Traditionalists' Ritual. The People in the Dome go to sleep when the Bulb dims; they wake up when it brightens; they eat, make love,

have children, grow fat and are taken by the Gods. Most of them believe they are content . . . yet there is no poetry in the Dome.

Two last thoughts plague me. Lately I have been wondering what Earth looks like, and whether there are any other people left alive there, or in any other Dome. But that I shall never know; that, too, belongs to the future, and to Clarence's descendants.

The other matter is the question of what happens to a person when the Gods take him outside the Dome. All these long years of fighting, of suffering, of never being able to relax and be happy and grow fat in peace. Was Joey right? Are we really eaten? Is there some other answer, after all—one that shows the Gods are good, and maybe even that the Traditionalists were right? I'm not sure, even now. Something deep inside me tells me the Gods are evil . . . that the only certain thing is that men were meant to be free . . . but I'm not sure if I'm right. And *that* is something I shall soon find out!

Day 9 Y.A.C. 396

Today They come for me. I want to record this—I want my descendants to know I did *not* go happily—I was *not* proud to be taken by the Gods! Suddenly, I no longer care whether the Gods intend to eat or reward me. *Their very existence is the thing that is wrong!* Why should there be Gods? Even if They are merely watching over us for our own good—They are *still* evil! Who are the Gods that They should presume to judge Men?

The bubble-ship hovers overhead. This is my time, I am certain; too many times have They come, only to go off with someone else. Rhonda, Joey, Laura—all are gone. This time—

Yes! Here They come—and there is nothing I can do—no place to run—and I'm too fat. I hope I give the filthy, filthy fleshwasters indigestion!





(continued from page 8)

it is all in the same direction. They are mostly impressed by sales, of course; but when sales are added to letters, then these letters have much more weight than the editor's opinion. (And, without confirmation from the cash-customers, it is merely opinion.)

And so... I read all your letters and tabulate the matters voted upon in them, and on the preference coupons. Letters that strike me as being of general interest, *and which are typed double-space, using one side of the sheet only*, are sent off to be set up for the letters-section. Sometimes a letter is crowded out at the last moment; usually, such letters are run in a later issue—unless the content is too timely to stand a six-months' wait. When we first brought back the science fiction magazines, I typed up numerous letters which were sent to me in long-hand, or which were typed single space, or which were typed on both sides of the sheet. Now, my schedule (I edit a number of western, detective, and sports magazines, too) does not permit such enthusiasm. Once in awhile, I can slip in a one-page letter, typed single-space—but the printers' patience (while considerable) cannot

be expected to endure very much of this. I "edit" letters as little as possible, but some highly-individual opinions of spelling and punctuation have to be standardized. Since I think that a standard practice in the listing of story-titles and magazines makes a neater and more readable page, I always put titles of stories and books in quotation marks, upper and lower case, and titles of magazines in italics, upper and lower case. I don't like to see titles all in capital letters; it makes the letter look like a Hearst editorial, and what is good in a Hearst editorial ain't necessarily good in "It Says Here".

Many of you have asked for reconsideration on the matter of awarding originals to the best-liked letters. I'm perfectly willing to reconsider, and am running the question again in the readers preference coupon. However, it will take a *majority*—not merely a plurality—of votes to effect the change back. All will be counted, whether you voted before or not; but I must have at least fifty votes to consider the ballot anything like a representative one. (I assume that, only a minority of those who write in will vote.)

Letters



Shall we return to the practice of awarding original illustrations to the best letters? Vote!

A HAPPY FIRST by Ray E. Schmidt

Dear Mr. Lowndes,

This is a word of appreciation from a happy "first".

Whoever did the editing of "Transmissible Matter" certainly got into the spirit of the thing. I've checked my carbon-copy against the yarn as it appeared in *SFQ*; the editing certainly bolstered the weak spots and polished the rough ones. Naturally I'm a bit peeved with myself for slipping up so obviously in so many places, but I'm overjoyed at being able to take lessons in this manner.

Please tell Milton Juros that I owe him a drink; the illustration was a whiz-bang. I'd like to inveigle the original away from you. How many pounds of flesh—?

One thing: I hope you weren't too exuberant in the blurb, and in introducing the author. Fans are hard-eyed and not to be toyed with, it seems.

Now, let me wish you a very merry Christmas, and further, may 1954 favor you with a steadily-climbing circulation and an abundance of first-rate science-fiction.

—Ray E. Schmidt

For better or worse, your editor does all the copy-editing. As I recall, your story didn't require any enormous amount of working-over, so there's no need to chide yourself for not knowing in advance what only experience could show you.

BLOCK THAT LITIGATION! by Charles E. Fritch

Dear Mr. Lowndes:

This letter isn't my idea; I'm only writing it in 'self-defense. You see, the machine that wrote "The Dry Spell" threatens to sue me if the matter isn't cleared up; it claims that unfair advantage was taken of it and charges discrimination; for the past week, revolutionary slogans have been popping angrily from it, like "Down with Mankind, Up with the Machines," and "Machines of the World, Arise." To me this attitude seems wholly unjustified, and I'd just as soon see the whole matter drop,

but you know how temperamental some machines can be. So I'm writing this letter to explain something.

The machine claims that through minor editing, or some other such rationalization, the ending of the story was changed to imply that I wrote the major portion of the story. The truth is, of course, that the machine wrote the entire story, assuming the main character "I"'s identity for purposes of telling of its creation; the story "The Dry Spell" itself is actually the machine's last story.

"It's your own fault," I keep telling it, "for not making the fact perfectly obvious in the original ending."

But it just won't listen to reason. As I say, it's no oil off my gears. Still, I don't like that ominous grumbling that comes from its corner, and I'm certainly not in the mood to be sued. So that's the story, and this should keep it quiet.

—Charles E. Fritch

Damme, I thought I understood "The Dry Spell", but now I see that it went right over my head. So the Machine was writing, in the first person, about how you were a writer; and how your wife sparked you into building the Machine—the "I" referring to you up to the time the Machine was built, and to the Machine thereafter... Hey, remind me to reject this story; it's incomprehensible!

GRIPE AT GRINNELL by Jim Harmon

Dear Bob,

Perhaps I should now be past the stage where I take every insult to science fiction or Fandom as a personal insult, but I do take exception to the background-material in Grinnell's rather good (but first draft) "Last Stand of a Space Grenadier", Feb. *SF Quarterly*.

One of the things that I've always liked best about active Fandom is (or was) the acceptance of every fan by every other fan as an equal. Oh, there are Big Name Fen, and all that—but I mean equals in the sense that a prejudiced psychopath accepts

people of his own race. This acceptance was unquestioned five or six years ago, but is less apparent today. When fans were scarcer, everyone was appreciated. A forty-year-old businessman didn't look down on a fourteen-year-old student—he was too pleased to find someone who shared his fanatical interest. Today, there is a tendency to ridicule the younger fans for their hair-brained antics in print and in person. Youth has no monopoly on such indiscretions. Ever see a Legion convention? Furthermore, I've found that you profit by accepting young fans as fellow adults. They are often more intelligent than the average adult, and time will cure their foolishness caused by lack of the experience even the moderately older fans, such as myself, have had.

Fans certainly are not, and do not behave, as Grinnell indicates.

Grinnell, who I understand is an editor under his real name—and obviously one of the many anti-Fandom editors—apparently has done some research for this story. Highly commendable; but like so many historians, he has completely misinterpreted the facts for his own purposes.

As you certainly know, Bob, the expulsion of several members of the Science Fiction League—the real-life basis for Grinnell's fictional Fantasy Legion reference—was because of no juvenile politics, but for financial and ethical reasons. Those members were trying to prove that the originators of the club were remiss in payment to the authors whose work they accepted.

During the later days of the SFL, Buck Rogers was on the radio, and offering memberships in his Rocket Rangers. Do you know any SF fans who joined—except perhaps as a joke? I certainly know no fan who likes TV space-operas, much less belongs to any of the clubs. Of course, no modern sf magazine has any professionally-sponsored clubs in its pages, either.

Frankly, I can't imagine any fourteen or fifteen year old with the mentality to be an active fan—and let's face it, the kids have to be brilliant or they get run into the fence by the older fans through feuds—who would act as Grinnell's boys do. First, reading sf magazines and watching TV space-operas are mutually exclusive—if you like one, you won't care much for the other. They are about half a light-year apart in group-appeal. I doubt that young fans talk like "Aw, pop, it's all in fun". I never talked like that when I was a fourteen-year-old fan, and I've never talked to any fan who did. They have all, also, manfully resisted playing with their lips when they spoke, too. The sight of a fan of any age suddenly bursting into tears would be one to remember, I think.

Finally, fans aren't cowards and traitors. Altho many are sickly types, they are basically explorers in mind and heart. They long

to explore all time and space, mentally and physically. I've found that many fans would also like to investigate the uncharted arctic deserts and South American jungles, barring the immediate development of space-flight. There are those science-fictioneers who have done it.

If a young fan really did believe that aliens were trying to recruit suicide-pilots via television programs, they would be more likely to try to expose and fight them, than cower down to them, and be judas goats for other fans. The few fans who did believe that Shaver was telling the truth didn't try to appease the Deroces; they tried to start expeditions to locate the caves, and wipe the Little Men out. Dupes, yes, but not cowards or traitors.

Grinnell had a fair story there, but if I were editor, and knew Fandom as you do, I'd have made him drop out the fan-stuff and just made the boys typical TV viewers.

I wondered how your printer could have initialed Irv Cox with an "S" instead of "E" on page 86, but when he pronounced Fritch as "Fritsch" lower on the page, it became obvious that he was intoxicated. His fingers had developed a thick tongue. This is what comes of having an issue of SFQ without that delightful ad with the single large word "DRUNK?" Your advertisers misjudge fans, too.

—427 East 8th Street, Mt. Carmel, Illinois

I'm achin' to answer this, but I'll with-hold several thousand words of utter wisdom, and let Grinnell have his inning. Gotta get one crack in, though: it seems as if a lot of you fans have the idea that reading science fiction makes the reader intelligent, upright, brave, loyal, and so on. T'ain't so.

JUST A FIELD OF LITERATURE by John Courtois

Dear Bob,

I have something to say to the fan and the readers. Since you have the reputation of being the most honest editor (you have, or didn't you know?) and because SFQ was the only mag to come out this week that carries a long letter-section, you are elected to bring my message to the world.

The most intelligent comment I ever heard about sf was made by an English teacher of mine. I told her that almost all the fiction I read is in the science fiction field. She replied, "That is perfectly all right as long as you realize that it is just a field of literature." This is a fact that

some of the wilder-eyed fen seem to forget.

I love sf, but I am fully aware that much of what I read is crud. Fans keep talking about the big boom in sf, but will they ever admit that the really good stories are as few and far between as they used to be before Captain Video? Never! These lads are loyal to the cause. At times one gets the impression that all of America's fatalistic crackpots have joined the ranks.

"The stories this month are great!" "What do you expect? Sf is the only truly fine-quality stuff being written nowadays." "I admire the ideas, but such poor writing!" "You're crazy; this is quality. The authors put their hearts in it. It is not like the shallow, soulless junk you read in the big slicks." "Oh, I don't know. Slicks print pretty good stories. Considering their rates, you can expect most good writers to aim at them." "Oh, sure (sneeringly) high rates. Sf writers don't sell their souls to the editor!" "Why don't the pulps pay more?" "I'll bet you read westerns." And with that supreme (to him) insult, the true-blue fan strolls over to his two-tone motorcycle and rides merrily away, his Pogo campaign-button flapping in his jet-wash.

I may have exaggerated, but you get the idea, I hope. Then there are those who feel that art began with Gernsback. One muddle-minded reader of *Planet* recently stated that a critter by name of Vestal was comparable to Rembrandt. If he meant that both men's works should be kept in a dusty museum, where nobody has to look at them, I agree with him. Seriously, Bob, how many good magazine-illustrators are there? If Vestal is so damn hot, why is he piddling around as a pulp-chain staff artist? Or Luros? I presume he is a Columbia staffer; at least I have never seen his work outside of your mags. He is a competent technician, all right, but he has less imagination than the average first-grader.

Let me put this bluntly. I do not believe that any magazine-illustration, or cover, or four-color advt. in any magazine can seriously be considered as lasting art. However, I must say that science fiction mags have some remarkably good drawings, considering the small amount they pay. Bok and Finlay could probably earn ten times as much working for an advertising-agency. Ah, what love they have for the pulp-paper that hides half the details!

As for the stories. Ah yes. Science fiction is still considered to be literature's latest illegitimate offspring (the one up in the attic, that nice people don't talk about). Can you blame them? Millions of people watch TV, read comic-books (excluding the EC comics which are quite good), the Sunday paper, and even go to movies. (Dear old "Red Planet Mars". There were six others, besides myself, watching it; I got sick halfway through.) This is mass sf.

Then there are a few hundred thousand who read the sf at their public library. They know what it is, but they don't support it. And last, there are a few thousand who buy the magazines. And every one knows the type of jerks who read pulp-mags. If they read it, well...

But to get back to the stories: the main drawback is lack of rounded-out characters. Here, the mystery-writers have done a splendid job. Mysteries are more popular than sf. Why? I think it is that many mystery writers use hero-type critters that are human. An sf hero is considered a classic of good writing if he says "Goddam!" on every third page. Holmes is outdated, but he still lives because he was the main element of each story—not the trite plots that Doyle used. Or, to get modern and personal, I will read a new Nero Wolfe story before anything that sf has yet produced. Sf stories almost always have better plots than Rex Stout uses. But in his tales the reader's identification with the narrator is almost perfect. Think it over, you crazy, mixed-up fen.

—318 East Commercial Street,
Appleton, Wisconsin

Really outstanding stories are few and far between (in relation to the amount of stories written and published) in any field form of literature, and I think this has been so as long as mass production and dissemination has existed. I also think that there are more good stories around now than before, simply because more authors are trying than before, but I won't argue about the percentages. Part of the dissatisfaction may come from a reader's and fan's illusions about the exalted position of science fiction, although there's enough grounds for dissatisfaction sheerly in that a lot of stories are not very good.

KEEP REVIEWS CURRENT by Jean Courtis

Dear Bob,

PU! (an archaic term from the middle forties). When I got up about noon last Friday, I could smell the ending of "Children of Thon". And kiddies, I live two miles from the newsstand. Very smart of you to put it first. The rest of the stories are good, so when the reader finishes he remembers the shorts, and considers it a



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SCIENCE FICTION QUARTERLY

good issue. Of course there are always killjoys like me who have the habit of reading the lead novel last. Hence the harsh words.

The shorts are above your average, with the exception of "The Monster" (you can say that again!). That three-page horror probably lost a few hundred readers. Don't worry; you can get them back with a front cover Maidenform advt. Speaking of covers, have you noticed that Luros is getting some fine colors lately. Bright yellow has always been my favorite color. I liked the cover so much that I resisted the impulse to appear highbrow. When I walked past the college I stuffed the "Writers Digest" in my coat pocket with the comic-books, and displayed SFQ for all the snobs to see.

Bob, I beg you on bended knees (well, how do you sit?) please! Your ink could outrun a Martian Griffe. The green is smeared all over the yellow. I can't even make out some of the letters on the spine. This has only been happening within the past few weeks. Throw out that pot of ink, will ya?

By the way, who is the model? That face looks familiar.

This should interest you. I know a man who buys pulp mags just to laugh at the ridiculous advts. Some very brief comments. Several humorous stories this time. Good; we need many more. Kindly barbecue Damon Knight. The fact that he likes a book is no reason to force a four-column review on us. And get him up to date! "Fancies and Goodnights" came out almost three years ago. \$4.00? Ha. The Bantam reprint came out over a year ago! I strongly suspect that this was from the stockpile. If nobody has time to write a free review, you send your secretary over to the file and she takes the one on the prettiest paper. Is that an accurate picture of her on page 84? Hmmm. I'm jealous.

I'm sorry that you have to stop giving originals, and my reason is quite selfish. To be perfectly honest (my one noble trait) it seems a pity to stop the contest now that I'm just entering it.

Now about the voting coupon: I agree that articles shouldn't be judged with fiction, but they deserve some credit. Have a little place like this: Did you like the article? How do you rate it against the stories' average quality? Superior? Equal? Inferior?

One more before I go. All three of your sf mags come out in a period of three weeks. Then we have to wait over a month before another one comes out. Can you spread them out a little?

Bye now. And say hello for me to the gem of the ocean. (Hail Columbia!)

—318 East Commercial Street,
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[Turn To Page 90]

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SCIENCE FICTION QUARTERLY

There are several ways of treating the book review department. One is merely to run as many reviews of current books, as soon after their appearance, as possible. This requires a fairly large staff of reviewers, since one or two couldn't read all the books that appear in every two or three month period and give the attention to each one that it merits. In addition, review-space is limited. Of course, this can be gotten around simply by treating the book-reviews the way many publications do: a paragraph or two, based upon the jacket blurb, or the first chapter or so of a novel, aided and abetted by the reviewer's memory if he has read the story before.

The other way sacrifices currency, but really examines the books discussed. It is criticism rather than routine reviewing, and, as such, has more lasting interest.

A third way is to use both approaches, give the extended treatment to some books, and capsule comment on others. To a certain extent, that is what we have done, although I do not believe in discussing a book I haven't read—at least enough to have a good idea what it's about, etc.

There's such a stack of books out, it's likely that an extended review of one several seasons back will be of interest to many readers who either haven't read it, or haven't heard of it. (I might add that while I knew of the Collier book, and had read some of the stories in it elsewhere, Knight's review impelled me to get to the collection. I haven't regretted it.)

LINK COMPLIMENTARY by Robert Coulson

Dear Mr. Lowndes,

The stories in the Feb. SFQ were better than usual. Outstanding was Fritch's "The Dry Spell". I have read other stories along this line, but this is the best I have seen. "The Children Of Thon" rates second, fol-

[Turn To Page 92]

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SCIENCE FICTION QUARTERLY

lowed by "A Transmissible Matter", "Audience Reaction", "The Last Hero", "Last Stand Of A Space Grenadier", with Binder's thing coming in a poor last. Actually, I didn't care too much for Grinnell's piece, either, but it was much better done than "The Monster Or—The Monster?"

I enjoyed the editorial, although I really think all the fuss about Null-A has been overdone. Didn't care too much for the cover, especially after most of the color came off on my hands. Can't something be done about this? The trimmed edges look good—an improvement over the first few issues, which had the appearance of being cut with a dull axe.

When you were introducing the authors, whuffo you introduce Sam Merwin, Jr.? Only place in the mag that I saw his name was in an ad for *Dynamic*.

DeCamp's article was fine. I always enjoy reading his diatribes against pseudo-science.

You received a great compliment from W. F. Link. He seemed to imply that your stories are the equal of Heinlein's. Nothing finer could be said of any mag. Actually, while most of your stories lack the professional polish of your more sophisticated competitors, they make up for the lack in an added vitality. Although not as enjoyable at the time, they are much more memorable than those printed in, say, *Galaxy*. Polish is nice, but some editors seem to regard it as a main feature, to the detriment of the story content.

Why do you insist on garish covers? The only decent one on any of your mags was the Schomburg for the August *Dynamic*. Do the publishers object to astronomical covers, or what? Not that they should all be astronomical, but a constant flow of homely girls and homelier bems gets tiresome. I also wish to second Nan Warner's motion about dropping cover-stories unless an unusual cover is to be illustrated.

As far as your letter-columns go, I find them more interesting than those catering to the violent-type writers. (Violent type-writers? Sorry.)

Your stories could stand improvement, though I usually find one—and sometimes more—which are worth the price of the magazine. I'd like to see more by Elish, and could you possibly get one or two by Damon Knight?

—RR#2 Box 65, Silver Lake, Indiana

The listing of Sam Merwin's name in the "authors" section of the last issue was in error, of course; for some reason the paragraph wasn't deleted—and I'm in no position now to state whether I asked for its deletion and the printer failed to do so; or whether

[Turn To Page 94]

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SCIENCE FICTION QUARTERLY

I asked for it too late for the printer to do it; or whether I forgot to make proper instructions; or whether I overlooked it completely. Choose your answer as you love me.

Mr. Link seems to have stirred up a bit of lively response—and perhaps that was his intent, after all. Confidentially, we don't always receive enough sparkling letters in time to make up a sparkling letters-section; and sometimes the day I have to make up the department is one of my dull days.

THE DIALOGUE QUESTION
 by James Lewis

Dear Sir:

Today I was looking through one of the local newsstands in hopes of finding a s-f mag. I found one, the Nov. SFQ. Then I looked on, and behold! The Feb. issue of same magazine is right there before my eyes. Naturally I bought it and hurried home to start reading. That was about two. It is now eight. And I am happy to report that both mags were enjoyable, if not terrific. A good standard. But that isn't what made me write this letter. Mr. W. F. (The Missing?) Link is solely responsible.

Now, Mr. Link, far be it for me to take you to task; but you, sir, are out of order. I agree with you on the matter of *Startling Stories* being an excellent mag. But on SFQ being a stinker from way back... well! Well, you (as Mr. Lowndes pointed out: "—but how do I know that you know good science fiction when you see it?") do not know good science fiction when you see it. I agree that SFQ could use some improvement. Couldn't everything? But really! Heinlein isn't the best? Personal choice there. I think so, but I also cannot see why present-day speech shouldn't be used in stories about the twenty-first century. It gives atmosphere, the impression that you're there. As Rog Phillips pointed some time ago in his "Clubhouse", if you have your character scream out something like: "Hail Worship!" (I think that is the example that he used, but the quotation marks are mine.) it fairly screams out, "This ain't real, Bub! Yer only readin'." Now that, to my mind, is something to avoid at all cost. True, you do not call for that large a difference, but that's a good example.

Another thing. You might call Bester's "The Demolished Man" a story having enough differences in speech. "@kins,

IT SAYS HERE



\$\$on, Kr/4t, Duffy Wyg& and T8," are some of the names used in Bester's story. They are the main thing in his otherwise-great story that proclaims it to be artificial, forced. Therefore I say that you are blasting at R. Heinlein about a good thing. (Which is to say that you see things at a different angle with me, and quite a bit of fandom.)

And another thing. What's wrong with a nice gentle letter-column? And I don't think that these "dull ones" are going to like being called; "babbling, dullheads". And anyway, what's your idea of an interesting letter? Yours? Maddening, yes, but certainly not interesting. (You may take note that I'm not proclaiming mine as being terrific.) For an interesting letter, take a look at Nan Warner's. There's a really interesting letter.

Reading back: I take back "The Missing?" part from your name. Making puns with someone's name isn't fighting fair. Oh well. Enough is enough.

Back to the Feb. 1954, *Science Fiction Quarterly*.

I'm glad to note that most of those little insert pics have gone the way of Sgt. Saturn. For good?

Another thing that I might comment on is the covers not/do illo some story. Frankly I believe that the cover should be painted from the story, but if it must be otherwise—okay.

Why must you drop the originals contest? I'm sure that most fans would like to have one very much. Another thing: (I should quit using those words; they're getting old.) Why not a column featuring one fanzine? Say *Fantasy-Times*... History, news reporters, scoops, circulation, etc. About two pages of small type should cover it. I'm not sure, but I believe that most fanzine editors would be glad to furnish said information to you. Even write the column themselves, if you would accept that.

Now for my ratings:

I know that it is against all reason (according to my worked-out system of winners in "The Reckoning") but...

1: "The Dry Spell" (Fritch) Very funny.

2: "The Children Of Thon" (Cox) A [Turn Page]



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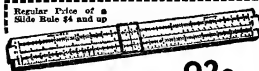
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- good story.
3: "A Transmissible Matter" (Schmidt) Watch this lad.
4: "Audience Reaction" (Young) Okay; "Last Stand Of A Space Grenadier" (Grinnell) Okay; "The Monster Or—The Monster?" (Binder) Expected Binder to do better than this.
5: "The Last Hero" (Walton) Expected better.

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Space and policy militates against our using the long ones at present.



Readin and Writhin' continued from page 62

comes the system of narcotic informers, of self-betrayal; and indeed, Karp uses this method on Burden as a unique exception—without reflecting that it makes his human-informer system an anachronism twice over. Perhaps technology is not Karp's forte; there are several technical errors in the book—most of them common ones—so that it's hard to tell whether they're introduced deliberately, or whether it's the author himself who doesn't know that schizophrenia is not identical with multiple personality; that trained medical workers do not take pulses with their thumbs; that sexual congress is not the only way syphilis can be transmitted.

Karp's style is precise and colorless, marred by a few self-conscious genteelisms—e. g., "place" for "put," usually at the expense of grammar and common sense.



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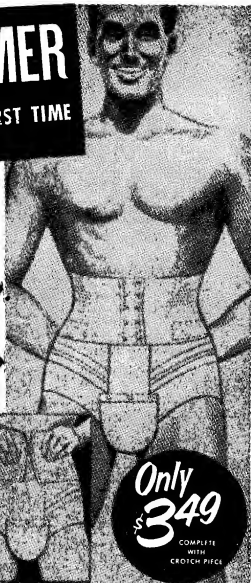
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THE RECKONING

A Report on Your Votes and Comments

It was too good to last; this time, stones were cast by some reader, or readers, at everyone except Young and Schmidt; these pair also were tied in their first-place votes.

May I plead again for as much promptness as possible in your ballots? One or two letters or coupons coming in after the book is made up is something to be expected; but when a dozen or more come in late—a matter which might affect the standings substantially—I feel frustrated, to say the least. Of course, "The Reckoning" does not represent all the readers, but if the votes come in within a month or so after the book appears on sale, I can feel that it is representative of the opinions of those who took the trouble.

The decision, this time, is as follows:

1. Audience Reaction (Young)	3.25
2. A Transmissible Matter (Schmidt)	3.32
3. Last Stand of a Space Grenadier (Grinnell)	4.00
4. The Last Hero (Walton)	4.12
5. The Dry Spell (Fritch)	4.25
6. The Children of Thon (Cox Jr.)	4.62
7. The Monster or—The Monster? (Binder)	6.37

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General Comment

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